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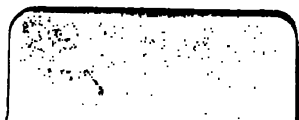
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**HINTS ON SCRIPTURAL EDUCATION, AND ON
INSTRUCTION BY CATECHISING ;**

**INTENDED FOR THE USE OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF
PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS.**

A C H A R G E

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF SALOP

IN THE

DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD,

AT THE VISITATION IN JUNE, 1835.

BY

EDWARD BATHER, M.A.

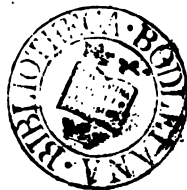
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TO THE
CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY
OF SALOP.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

Circumstances over which I had no control prevented the publication of the following Remarks at the time of their delivery.

I had not, however, forgotten your request ; and I now take the opportunity of printing them at the same time with a few Observations, in which the subject of Parochial Ministrations is further pursued, and which you have also been so kind as to approve.

I am, with much regard,

Your obliged and faithful

EDWARD BATHER.

Meole Brace,
August 1, 1837.

A CHARGE, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

Bishop Horsley in his primary charge at St. David's, in which he exposes the inefficiency of what has been called "moral preaching," and the fallacy of the assumptions on which it proceeds—adds, "I flatter myself that we are, at present, in a state of recovery from this delusion. The compositions which are, at this day, delivered from our pulpits are, I think, in general, of a more christian cast than were often heard some thirty years since, when I first entered on the ministry." What Horsley says in 1790 may be stated with much less exception in 1835. Infirmary, no doubt, must ever cleave to all human teaching; but it can, by no means, be alleged now, that our proper office, "to publish the word of reconciliation," is lost sight of. There is, on

the contrary, in the discourses of the clergy, a much fuller exhibition than in time past of the fundamental doctrines of holy scripture, as defined in our Articles and recognised in our Liturgy, and the people are fed accordingly with the "sincere milk of the word."

Is it, however, certain that their growth thereby in grace and heavenly wisdom is proportionate? I believe the fact to be both that our church is gaining ground in the minds of devout and pious persons, and that the number of such persons has, of late, been greatly increased through God's blessing on the ministrations of the Clergy. Nevertheless, whilst secession from our ministry is frequent, we do not, even with our customary hearers, prevail for good in the measure that at least is to be coveted; nor, I fear, in the measure that might be expected, should we advert only to the improved character of public teaching. And if this be true, it is a grave matter, and it becomes a needful question how we may account for it.

Much seed of course will always fall by the way side, upon the rock, and among the thorns. And hindrances to our success may have arisen, besides, from some obvious peculiarities of the times in which we live. On these, however, as being little under our control, it is not my intention now to dwell. But one grand and frequent

cause of failure with us at present, may, I think, be
 aimed, which it rests with ourselves to remedy—
 which, with due exertion, we might remedy in a
 good degree, and which, if we would “make full
 proof of our ministry,” it is specially incumbent
 upon us to attend to now, both because peculiar
 facilities for the *application* of the remedy are, at
 the present moment, afforded us, and also, be-
 cause those very things, if we neglect to make
 our advantage of them, may possibly ere long
 be turned against us.

Preaching, as the term is commonly under-
 stood, that is to say, “the explaining of the word
 of God by a lively voice, and the application of
 it to the people’s use, as the speaker in his
 wisdom thinketh meet,”* is, no doubt, a way of
 teaching, by which, through the divine blessing,
 men are wont to be brought to the saving know-
 ledge of the truth. But it is not the *only* way ;
 neither will it do the work of other instruments
 equally needful to be employed. “The eye can-
 not say to the hand, “I have no need of thee,”†
 and among the whole body of christian means,
 “those members which seem to be more feeble,”
 will oftentimes, perhaps, be found to be most
 “necessary.” At all events, it cannot reasonably
 be expected that preaching should stand in the
 place of those methods which in the nature of

* Hooker.

† See 1 Cor. xii. 21.

things ought to go before it. And, accordingly, I am fully persuaded that a great many very honest and faithful, and, at the same time, very clear and well-digested sermons, which have cost the preachers of them much labour and research, and thought and care and prayer, are, nevertheless, in numerous instances, much thrown away upon the hearers of them—hearers, moreover, by no means unwilling to be taught—simply *on this account*, that in the instruction of our people, we have, of late years, too much neglected to *begin at the beginning*. The primitive order of *catechising* has, for causes which I cannot now stay to discuss, fallen into too general disuse; and “sermons,” to use, with but little qualification, the plain words of an old writer, “can never do good upon an uncatechized congregation.”* In order, therefore, to our efficiency as religious instructors, this very necessary and ancient practice must, I think, be revived.

I have somewhat to say, then, my reverend Brethren, upon this subject; but *first* respecting those facilities for our work, to which I have referred.

It is quite unnecessary for me to remind you of the great, and general, and still increasing demand, which is, at this moment, made everywhere for *knowledge*. Neither need I say, that,

* Comber.

whether the mass of the people shall, in some way or other, be educated or not, is a question practically decided. You know too—for yourselves have been among the chief agents in the business—what this demand, meeting with much beneficence on the part of opulent persons, has already produced in the actual multiplication of schools throughout the country. It has been stated in parliament as the result of official returns, that in thirty-three counties only, 1,144,000 children are educated in unendowed day-schools ; whereas, in 1818, there were, for all England, only 478,000.

Now, it is, in my mind, a very happy circumstance that the Clergy have already taken so vigorous a part in this matter. But, what I would insist upon is this ;—that we have a great deal more to do than simply to go with the stream ; and lend our influence in common with others to the work, and so to the still further increase of these institutions. I could wish *this* indeed, and if government shall continue public grants, we shall take care, I trust, to obtain our share of them through the National Society ; and we shall do well, also, to pay a very particular attention to the support of Sunday-schools. For, in the first place, they may be made very useful ; and being also much less costly than day-schools, they are, at once, more easily to be maintained by ourselves,

and more likely to be made the means of drawing away the children of our people from us, by any who are disposed to be the adversaries of our ministry.

This, however, is not all. There is a grand movement not to be *promoted* only, but to be watched and properly *directed*. And it is our concern so to put ourselves, each in his place, at the head of it, or, at least, so to be always at our post where it is proceeding, as to make its operations subserve the interests of religion, of the national church, and of the souls committed to us. In transacting in this matter, therefore, we must both bear in mind our own official character and designation, and labour also in our proper calling:—*first*, see to it, as far as in us lies, that schools be what they ought to be *in their regulations*, and *for the matter of the instruction to be given in them*; and *then*, be careful, actually *to avail ourselves of them as auxiliaries in our office*. Which, as I shall hope to show, they very well may be made, and that especially in the way to which I have referred, and of which, before I conclude, I am about to speak at large.

We hear much, at present, respecting the public duty and political advantages of disseminating “useful knowledge,” meaning, I suppose, what may help a man to thrive in the world, and may be employed to multiply the comforts and

improve the arts of life, and withal to render its possessor a more useful member of society. Be it so. But this, in such exclusive sense at least, is not that knowledge which we have to do with. We must aim at nothing lower than "making ready a people prepared for the Lord." Neither must we be as those, "who without a foundation build their house upon the sand." If we may be instruments in training up any to "sober, industrious, prudent, and virtuous habits," it is, doubtless, a main part of our duty to attempt it: we owe it to society and to our pupils equally, and that in the discharge of our proper functions towards them, as "their servants for Christ's sake." For confessedly the religion is vain which bringeth not its disciple to do his duty in that state of life, to which God has called him. But then there is one prescribed way, and only one, by which we *may lawfully* or *can hopefully* pursue this end; that is, by the strenuous and faithful inculcation of divine truth. We are *watchmen*, moreover, and if knowledge be power as is so truly and, so commonly both said and boasted, it cannot be less than a gross neglect on our part, to give it, or even to stand by and see it spreading, without doing our utmost that those principles may be rooted in its possessors, through which alone they can be safely trusted with it. All too is not sound knowledge which claims to

be so ; and in proportion as it is evident that the young people of our charge will have opportunity as they grow up of free access to books, and to many other means of acquainting themselves with men's opinions, it is matter of absolute necessity to supply them before-hand with a standard by which they may assay the quality of whatsoever they may read or hear ; and, since one standard there is, but only one which is infallible, and that—namely, the Bible—the very one of which we are constituted the official keepers—to be true to God and to our brethren, we must withstand, to the uttermost, every system of education in which the Bible has not a place, and that place too, which common sense and common honesty must ever assign to it, if, upon the grounds on which it demands to be studied, it is to have a place at all. I mean most prominently and unequivocally the first place. I would by no means indeed interdict, even in charity-schools, the acquirement of any useful knowledge which may be acquired without undue sacrifices. I would, in no sense or manner, grind the face of the poor ; nor would I withstand his rising in the scale of society if he can. And when it is said, something more is desirable for him than “ mere reading and writing and a little arithmetic,” so say I too. I should like to see him taught *to think*. And I believe he may be taught without any

departure, on our side, from our special vocation in the teaching of him. Viewing instruction as an instrument for unlocking the mind and strengthening the faculties, he must be a poor instructor and little competent to accomplish his object in any way, who cannot exercise young people's understandings quite sufficiently with such a book as the Bible to submit to them.

Sure I am, they may be sooner interested in it than in any other book in the world ; and therefore may more easily be brought to give a fixed attention to it, and to reason upon it. And if this be carried as far as very easily it may be, and as God saying,—“ Come now and let us reason together,”* evidently means it should be—the poor man's child will come forth into life, capable of acquiring for himself all he ever need know besides, and of grappling with whatsoever he is likely to have to deal with ; for he will be possessed of a power which he can at any time bring to bear, as his future opportunities shall suggest or his special necessities demand. But be this as it may, if during the short period—and every one knows how short it is—allowed for teaching him, he cannot learn everything, of course he must be confined to that which is indispensable ; and we may dismiss him with a safe conscience and with the best of all good hopes

* Isa. i. 18.

also, when we have done our utmost to make him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*

I do not mean by these observations to charge any friends of education, who disavow such a purpose, with intending to reject the scriptures altogether. But if the knowledge of the Bible is to be but an item in the catalogue of a poor child's acquirements, as is very likely to be the case if too much is aimed at, and if schoolmasters are to be tempted to seek their own credit by having a variety of such things to exhibit in their pupils as worldly parents are wont to over-estimate, the practical effect, in a general way, will be apt to be, that whilst we are careful and troubled about many things, the one thing needful will escape us utterly.

Another question arises here. Granting what has been said; how is the matter to be settled, as education becomes general, between persons of different religious persuasions? Are we to agree to the liberal scheme, as it has been called, of rejecting all peculiarities in order to teach those broad and fundamental truths, which all called Christians are agreed upon? Alas! which be they? I hold that this cannot honestly be attempted, and I hold, too, that it is impracticable. Liberality doubtless is a good thing; but because

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

this is generally admitted, it hath fared with liberality as it is wont to do with other good things in this world. I mean some very bad things have called themselves by its name. And in this scheme, we have an instance. For the liberality here pretended can be nothing but an unrighteous compromise, and that will never be assented to, except it be either by such as have some private, or perhaps even sectarian, design in view, which under special circumstances this mode may further in the issue,—or by people very easily deceived by names and pretences—or else by those who in their hearts are indifferent to truth altogether. It cannot, I think, be denied, that we are bound in conscience to support, and on all fit occasions to avow, the principles which we have conscientiously and deliberately adopted, or that if we undertake the office of religious instructors, we never can be justified in withholding from those whom we profess to bring to the knowledge of salvation, any truth which is necessary to that end; and which we might communicate. But if we adhere to this liberal plan, how is the first of these things to be done, or the last avoided? If in so broad a matter as the conducting of education, we dispense with our church's creed and formularies, we renounce virtually our profession as churchmen—and if we dispense with all peculia-

rities, we dispense in fact with everything. For what gospel truth is not questioned and impugned by some or other? But indeed I think we may, in this case, as in every other in which man is concerned with man, gather sufficient instruction from a faithful application of the plain rule—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them." Give to the poor just what ye yourselves desire to receive, or having received are determined to abide by. This is the charitable way, and the honest and the safe way, too; and in my mind the only way. It is an awful matter, doubtless, to be teachers at all, in things which concern men's souls. But it is God's ordinance that there should be teachers, and if so, we have need, first, with much caution and much prayer, to settle our own religious principles. But having so done, what we are thus come to, as far as our pupils can receive it, we must inculcate. And if we teach the children of the poor neither more nor less, nor other than we teach our own children, and would on no account keep back from them—just that and nothing else which we make the sole basis of our own comfort and confidence in the prospect of death and judgment, we are then as charitable as we know how to be, and give at the same time the best security for our integrity which the nature of the case admits of,

whilst we escape ourselves from under the malediction—"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."*

Here also, however, I desire not to be misunderstood. I do not mean to accuse of compromise and desertion of their principles, those of other communions, who support the many schools now in existence from which the inculcation of all peculiarities is professedly excluded, because I know the fact to be, that they are wont to have what appears to them a remedy—the children being instructed out of school-hours, and on the Lord's day especially, by their respective ministers or their agents, when, of course, they may and do inculcate their own tenets. But whilst, on the one hand, this, as far as it goes, is a testimony from those parties themselves to the truth of my general argument, I must say, on the other hand, that such a provision is, as far as we of the Church of England are concerned, utterly unsatisfactory and insufficient. How far it may suit the arrangements and meet the demands of others, it rests with themselves to consider. But for our own part, we shall decide respecting the adoption of things of this nature by looking to what is likely to be the practical working of them. The great majority of ourselves have quite as much to do on the Lord's day in our

* James iv. 17.

churches, as our health and strength and animal spirits can carry us through, animated as we may be with zeal for the souls of men, and supported, as in that case we shall be, by divine grace. We cannot, therefore, do all that is necessary for children on that day, though, as I shall show, we may do something very considerable, provided only that we may have free access to them on other days. And they are, besides, the lambs of our special flock ; and why should we, or how can we, voluntarily surrender our right of access to them at any time ? We never can so conveniently or so effectually instruct them as when we have them in their schools, with their Bibles in their hands. This point, therefore, we may not concede ; the schools which we support must be those exclusively wherein we can take our proper station and discharge our functions towards the souls committed to us, at our discretion, and as we have leisure and opportunity, without let or molestation or undue interference on the part of any. We may not desert our post nor surrender a tittle of our advantages.

Having, however, such schools as I have spoken of, and such right also of free entry, we have then a stepping-stone and an auxiliary of which it behoves us diligently to avail ourselves, and especially, as by means of it we have very great facilities for doing our work as catechists.

And now, my Reverend Brethren, I must ask your kind attention to what I have to submit to you on this head.

“With religion it fareth,” saith Hooker, “as with other sciences, the first delivery of the elements thereof must be framed according to the weak and slender capacity of young beginners ; unto which manner of teaching principles in Christianity, the apostle, in the sixth of the Hebrews, is himself understood to allude. For this cause, therefore, as the decalogue of Moses declareth summarily those things which we ought to do ;—the prayer of our Lord whatsoever we should request or desire,—so either by the apostles or at leastwise out of their writings, we have the substance of christian belief compendiously drawn into few and short articles, to the end that the weakness of no man’s wit might either hinder altogether the knowledge, or excuse the utter ignorance of needful things. Such as were trained in these rudiments, and were so made fit to be afterwards by baptism received into the church, the fathers usually in their writings do term hearers ; as having no further communion or fellowship with the church than only this, that they were admitted to hear the principles of christian faith made plain to them.”* What was done in the first age, in the case of adults, and in

* B. v. § 18.

their case, must be done still, previously to baptism,—in the case of persons baptized in infancy, must of course be done now previously to confirmation. I will not, however, detain you by producing authorities for this practice. In the tenth book of Bingham's *Antiquities*, in which he treats of catechumens and of the gradual exercises and discipline prescribed for them, you will find full information respecting the usages of the apostolic age, and of the times immediately succeeding, with reference to this matter : and the fifty-ninth canon, the office of baptism, the church catechism and the rubric at the end of it, which, if in some respects it qualifies the injunctions of the canon, does by no means abrogate them—I need not quote.

But I would be permitted to speak more at large of the nature of the work itself.

Our church in her catechism has herself provided a summary of the needful rudiments. And we have in it the general heads of instruction to which all that we need teach a child may be conveniently and properly reduced. This is of course to be committed to memory. But the use to be made of the formulary when it has been committed to memory, or how children are to be catechized out of it, is another thing. "Sure I am," says Bishop Law, "catechizing in its true and original sense, implies something more than

the bare running over of an old form, though that consists of proper questions and answers, and contains whatsoever is needful for faith and practice." Catechisms supply the teacher with matter to be amplified and enlarged upon, and the learner with such a condensation of things delivered to him in their particulars as he may lay up easily in his mind, so as to recollect, by means of it, what he has been taught. But no summary of this sort will suffice instead of the necessary exposition in detail. "For generals not explicated are of no practical use. They do but fill the people's heads with empty notions, and their mouths with perpetual unintelligible talk."* They must be explicated therefore; and it will be best done by some method or other of *vivâ voce* teaching; and somewhat of this sort seems, I think, to be required even by the rubric—for the expressions are—The curate shall diligently "instruct and examine" the children, "in some part of this catechism;" which surely is not the same thing as merely hearing them repeat the words by rote.

I shall understand catechising, then, as it is commonly defined—namely, as signifying—instruction in the first rudiments of any art or science communicated by asking questions and hearing and correcting the answers. And if I

* Bishop Taylor's advice to his Clergy, § xlii.

may be allowed to put my meaning into very familiar phrase and to state plainly what I would recommend, it is this :—That the catechist, having taken for his basis, or the subject matter to be unfolded, either some portion of the church catechism itself, or some text which illustrates it, or both, should then first “*instruct*” his pupils by questioning the meaning into them, and then “*examine*” them by questioning it out of them. The first process, it is obvious, may most conveniently be attended to in the school, and the second in the church ; or, in other words, in the school, where he has most time, and is in least fear of being tedious, he will naturally most apply himself to put those questions by which he means to conduct his pupils into knowledge of the subject ; and in the church, those by which he would give them opportunity to produce their knowledge ; but in neither situation will he confine himself to either mode exclusively. And then I say, when the meaning of any general head of faith or practice, as proved and illustrated by scripture, shall have been got out of the children in its particulars, or piece by piece, in answer to the questions put to them—those children themselves and the by-standers together will be a congregation, just in a fit condition to profit, under God, by exhortation or preaching : and there are two ways in which the minister may

address them with great advantage. He has the opportunity, whilst the catechetical instruction is proceeding, of interspersing, as he gets his replies, many brief remarks and practical observations in a natural and lively, and therefore attractive and affecting manner, or he may sum up the particulars afterwards in a short discourse, and ground upon them, with good effect, the admonitions which they obviously suggest.

But of this I shall have more to say presently. The practice recommended has, of course, its difficulties, and the method cannot be fully shown without more minute examples than can well be given in an address of this nature. I may possibly, however, explain myself in some degree. The thing to be done is to possess the minds of a number of ignorant and heedless children with the sense and meaning—we will say,—*of one of our Lord's parables*, and to bring them to perceive and consider the practical lesson which it is intended to convey. In order to this, their attention must in the first place be gained and fixed, and then there will probably be words and phrases to be explained, perhaps old customs also—the literal story or similitude to be compared with the religious truth or doctrine which it is employed to illustrate, and other portions of scripture to be cited, and brought to bear on the point in hand, in a way of confirmation or further

exposition. Then there are two ways of proceeding: you may *preach or lecture* upon the subject, and in so doing, you tell your hearers what you have acquired and ascertained yourselves: or else you may communicate instruction as I advise, *by asking questions, and correcting the answers*; or I should rather say, by bringing the children themselves to correct them, by means of further questioning on your part. And in that case they tell you everything. The truth and meaning comes out of their mouths to you, not out of yours to them, though it is certain you guide them to it and put it into them. Everybody knows what in the language of the bar is meant by asking leading questions, and that a witness must not be led—because there the object is not to *instruct* or tell him what he should say, but to *examine* him or inquire what he really knows and has to say; but the case of which we are now speaking being exactly the reverse, the catechist's aim being, at least in the first instance, to *instil*, and not to *extract*, his proceedings must be just what the advocate's ought not to be. And then the whole "skill," to use the words of Herbert in the Country Parson, consists but in these three points; first, an aim and mark of the whole discourse whither to drive the answerer, which the questionist must have in his mind before any question be propounded, upon which and to

which the questions are to be chained. Secondly, a most plain and easy framing of the question, even containing in virtue the answer also, especially to the more ignorant. Thirdly, when the answerer sticks, an illustrating of the thing by something else which he knows, making what he knows serve him in what he knows not.”*

And now, bearing in mind whom we are dealing with, the advantages of this method, as compared with preaching or lecturing, may easily be made apparent. “At sermons,” says Herbert, “men may sleep or wander, but when one is asked

* “As when the Parson once demanded, after other questions about man’s misery, Since man is so miserable, what is to be done? and the answerer could not tell: he asked him again, what he would do if he were in a ditch? this familiar illustration made the answer so plain, that he was even ashamed of his ignorance; for he could not but say he would haste out of it as fast as he could. Then he proceeded to ask, whether he could get out of the ditch alone, or whether he needed a helper, and who was that helper. This is the skill, and doubtless the holy scripture intends thus much, when it condescends to the naming of a plough, a hatchet, a bushel, leaven, boys piping and dancing; showing that things of ordinary use are not only to serve in a way of drudgery, but to be washed and cleansed, and serve for lights even of heavenly truths.

“This practice exceeds even sermons in teaching; but there being two things in sermons, the one informing, the other inflaming; as sermons come short of questions in the one, so they far exceed them in the other. For questions cannot inflame or ravish; that must be done by a set, and laboured, and continued speech.”—*Country Parson*, ch. xxi.

a question, he must discover what he is." And the case admits of easy experiment. Let the preacher and the catechist each try his skill with any fifty or a hundred hitherto untrained children, and let us see which will succeed best in gaining the first point with them. I mean simply which can most effectually and for the longest space of time, *keep them awake and listening*, the one by discoursing, or the other by questioning. For if this point be not gained, no other can. Long, I believe, before half an hour shall be out, the countenances of the little congregation will assure you whose weapons tell. No doubt the preacher will have *delivered* within the space ten times as much doctrine as the catechist will have *extracted* with his utmost pains-taking,—but what of that? The listlessness of his youthful auditory, the vacant looks of some, and the impatient gazings of the rest in all directions, let you know infallibly that their minds have never been occupied at all: perspicuous the speech may have been, but "like water that runneth apace," it has passed away from them as it flowed; and whether the matter discussed related to Peter or James or John, or the facts were done at Jericho or at Jerusalem, or the scope of the argument was to teach men to pray or to give alms, to repent or to believe the gospel, they know not. The sermon was blameless, but there was no constraint upon them to

give their thoughts to it. But just here is the catechist's advantage ; his method forces the child to think. Some little effort and application of mind is required of him—is actually extorted from him every moment. Instead of making a speech, the instructor has put a question ; perhaps he has got no answer, or a wrong answer, but he is not beating the air, and his pains are not thrown away ; if he has but shown his pupil that something has been asked of him, to which he can render no reply, at least he has arrested his attention, and probably excited his curiosity, and convinced him, moreover, of his ignorance, and made him perceive just in what place and instance he needs information ; and therefore if he has not made a proselyte, he has got a hearer, and from so small a beginning greater things are soon to follow. A few questions more lead the pupil's mind nearer and nearer to the point to which the instructor desires to bring him, till his eye actually catches it, and he sees it for himself, perceives that he has gone a step, and has ground to stand upon in reaching further ; and because he had something to do himself to make his advantage of his teacher's hint, and has himself delivered the result of his own reflections, he has discovered that he is capable of something, and his interest is excited and his mind gladdened, as the present gain of application and effort

comes to him. There is no lassitude, therefore, either with him or with his fellows : for the question, though addressed to one, was put in effect to all ; and the next question may be put to any, and accordingly all are on the watch and all eyes bent upon the instructor, demanding, as it were, whither he would lead them next. And if this can be kept up, as I know very well it can, as long as the catechist's own strength and spirits last, the hardest part of the work is done. At all events, the catechist has this advantage ; not only is the best method taken that the child should give his attention, it is seen at every step whether he is giving it or not, as also how far his diligence has actually brought him on in knowledge, and what he lacketh yet.

Let me be borne with while I enter a little further into exposition of the process. Let the first sentence which the catechist has heard his children read, be resolved or broken in his own mind into its parts or elements, and let him ask upon it two or three questions to which the very words of the two or three first clauses will severally be a reply ; he will get those very words as the answer in each case, and so, in effect, will have made the child construe the passage, and have brought him also to declare what persons he has been reading about—what was done and who did it—what was said and who said it, and

the like.* The answer, doubtless, is in the book in the child's hand, or under his eye, and therefore you may say, it is not much that he should be able to give it,—very true : but it is a good deal, and you will find it so, that you have brought him to look for it, and to fix his eye upon it that he may give it, and then to utter it with his own lips ; for he will thus have learnt to fix his attention upon one thing at a time. The little matter which he has told you he will remember, which is better than having a wise saying of yours to forget, and he will have taken the first step towards giving his mind to the subject matter of his reading ; whereas the most he knew before, or sought to know, was that such or such a combination of letters indicated such or such a sound. This is the first step : let us now take another. A difficult or unusual word is to be explained : in the parable of the two men who went up into the temple to pray, you ask perhaps what is a publican ? The child cannot tell, or tells you wrong. It is very easy for you to set him right ; but why do that, when it is much better and very possible to make him inform or correct himself. He will re-

* Jesus—seeing—the multitudes—went up—into a mountain. Whom did Jesus see ? Who saw the multitudes ? When Jesus saw the multitudes, what did he do ? Who went up ? Where did he go up ? When did Jesus go up into a mountain ? &c. &c.—*Bell's Instructions*, p. 83.

member, if you ask him, that there were twelve apostles, that one of them was a publican, and that his name was Matthew. And he can tell you then where Matthew was sitting, and what he was doing when Christ called him. He will thus have been brought to refer to two passages at least of his former reading ; and what he has thereby himself collected he will hold fast. And besides this, you will have entered him upon a practice which you will soon be able to carry much further, to his great profit and great delight ; that, I mean, of the collation or comparison of scripture with scripture. It would astonish an inexperienced person to see how much very young children may acquire in this way, and how much a whole school may be interested by it. In the first place, they get imperceptibly a knowledge of words and a fuller vocabulary ; and so one of the peculiar difficulties which every one will meet with who attempts to instruct the children of very ignorant parents, will be in a good degree overcome : his pupils will be able to explain themselves to him in a way which their original poverty of dialect at first prevented, to the great hindrance and fatigue of both parties. But better far than this, they will not only come to treasure up a great deal of scripture in their memories, they will come to a good and profitable understanding of it : to sound and simple, and, in time, very en-

larged views of divine truth. When a child produces one text to expound another, he puts what he remembers to use, he goes to work with it, and gets something out of it. Through collation of two passages he remembers both ; and his memory is of the sense, and of the *words*, as *expressing that sense*. People sometimes wonder at the quantity even of long passages which children will quote and repeat. This is the way, however, by which they are brought to it, and not by setting them down to learn passages by rote. And how much the method excites and interests them, and, at the same time, how easy it is to store their memories by means of it, may be seen in this, which, in the church, it is often necessary to check;—that when, in answer to a question, one child begins to quote a text, many more invariably, and often the whole school, instantly, and with a natural sympathy, go along with him in the utterance of it to the end. Let me, however, refer to the parable once more. As the two men went into the temple to pray, you will naturally be reminded to instil into the child some simple view of what prayer is, and of the spirit which begets it and befits it best, and is necessary to it. But it will be to little purpose to make a speech to this effect ; neither is there any need for it. In answer to your question, the child can tell

you what the two men went into the temple professedly to do. If an illustration is wanted, so familiar an object as the hungry beggar in the street will supply one ; and the child can quote a text in which praying is expounded by other expressions, as "*asking*," in order to receive, and "*seeking*," in order to find. When he has told you whose house the temple was, he need not be informed who is to be addressed in prayer. And looking at the parable again, and repeating what the pharisee and the publican severally said and did—he can state to you that the one, in fact, did *ask* or *seek* for mercy, whilst the other asked for nothing ; consequently that the one actually did pray whilst the other forgot his errand. And then you may readily get it out of him how it so came to pass, and what was so acceptable to God in the behaviour of the one party, and so offensive in the behaviour of the other. For the one called himself *a sinner*, as sensible of his need of mercy, and stood afar off as conscious of his unworthiness, whilst the other only railed and boasted. And so the child has learnt what thoughts of himself he must put out of his mind, and what humility and contrition befit him, when he would pray ; and since it is so clear that he has no claim or merit of his own, he will soon tell you also that he needs an advocate. I say, this method will do

more for a child than the plainest sermon whilst he is a child ; and when he shall become a man he will put away childish things.

The catechist, I mean, may deliver him over to the preacher. The first fruits of your labours, if you shall have persevered in the work, will be, that you will have trained up a body of hearers, attached to your persons, and to your ministry, and to the church also—and its usages and formularies—whom it will be easy to instruct further and to edify by sermons, and whom the adversaries of the truth will not easily corrupt. They are not to go out of the world, but the seed will have been sown in their hearts which, under the divine blessing, will keep them from the evil. Should their lot be cast among any who make open mock at sin, or deny the Lord that bought them, or impugn any plain and fundamental verity—all this will strike their minds at once as manifest contradiction to what they have been taught. The clear texts which in their obvious sense do actually disprove it all—and which they have a thousand times alleged with their own lips to prove the contrary, are still in their memories—and they will not be imposed upon by the mere effrontery of such as they know to be putting darkness for light and light for darkness. But *you* will possess their confidence—as wise master builders, you have already laid the one sound

foundation, and now, as you list, you may build thereon. You may reason with them out of the scriptures, for they know the scriptures and are capable of hearing reason. You may quote the scriptures—use scripture terms, illustrate, at your pleasure, by scripture similitudes and scripture history; and they will not wonder, with the utterly ignorant, to whom he that speaketh is a barbarian; nor cry out, with the self-conceited, what will these babblers say?—Nor will they be in the condition of those who, because general heads have never been explicated to them, estimate a sermon by the presence or absence of the phrases of a party—which phrases they themselves cannot render into other language, and therefore can never have obtained any definite instruction from them. Your hearers, on the contrary, will admit your authorities and your vouchers. They will be familiar with the facts which you adduce. Words will stand for something in their minds, and scriptural allusions be recognised and understood. And with hope you may advance to application and exhortation, having so thoroughly made good your ground.

By open catechising in the church, very much may also be done for remedy of the difficulties which are continually besetting you, in consequence of the defective and perhaps utterly neglected education of the grown members of your congre-

gations. I do not stay to inquire how often this exercise can be attended to ; or how far it may be made to consist in particular cases with your other labours. But to men earnest in their calling, whose care is not to justify their own failures, but to avail themselves as they may of every facility for usefulness—to such, I commend an instrument which may very well aid their purpose. You cannot be as minute in catechetical instruction in the church as you must be in the school. But having in the school ascertained what the measure of the children's knowledge is, you can make them produce it in the church, and you can add, as I have said, your own brief remarks as they are called for. And thus all the people of your charge will have the benefit of an easy and familiar method:—you will have an opportunity you much want of instilling instruction drop by drop, into ignorant adults as well as into ignorant children ; and you will be enabled, with almost equal ease and advantage, to arrest and fix their attention. For next to being asked a question ourselves, nothing awakens and interests us more than hearing others questioned. There will be curiosity to catch the child's reply. A thought can scarcely fail to cross the listener how he should reply himself, or whether he could reply. Many are glad to get information without the risk of exposing present ignorance ; and when

the information is watched and waited for, it is retained. Most people take pleasure in contemplating the efforts of children ; and here the auditory is composed of persons who regard the very children before them with a peculiar solicitude. The parents of many are observing the development of their faculties : and so are the friends and supporters of the school ; and here, therefore, I may add, the gain will become reciprocal. As you make your instructions, through the children, both useful and interesting to your congregations, you at the same time support and benefit your school. The parents will co-operate with you when they see what their children get, and contributions will come in more cheerfully, as it is found that your own pains have not been spared—and as pious and candid persons have opportunity to judge for themselves of the nature and proper tendency of the instruction given and acquired.

I grant you, my reverend brethren, that what I have been recommending will require some study and time and labour—but if this be an objection, let me, in part at least, reply to it. Your object is not to excuse yourselves from labour, but only to see that you are expending your strength to the best advantage. Then to those of you especially who are my juniors in the ministry, being, I believe, the majority here present, I will point out one more benefit derivable from catechising : not

only will you, by means of it, make your people better hearers—the practice, I will presume to assure you, will make yourselves readier writers and better preachers : you will find, upon trial, that there is no better way of analysing and studying a portion of scripture or a head of doctrine, in order to discourse upon it, than by breaking it up, if I may so express myself, in the manner required for the purpose of instilling it, by little and little, into the weak and uninformed. You will master the matter in this way for yourselves—many useful lights will come in upon your own minds in the process—you will see how truth may be best submitted to your hearers, and what they want to make it plain to them. When the school questioning is over, you will have collected so many materials and made so many experiments on the best method of arranging them, and so have possessed both your mind and your feelings with the subject, that you will be just in a condition to write upon it, fully and clearly and impressively ; and you will be full, moreover, of matter and good thoughts, which you may carry with you from house to house, in your private visitings of your flock, to great advantage. “The truth as it is in Jesus” you understand, but it is another thing to know how to impart it, and you will surely fail in your attempts to impart it to the ignorant unless some method be taken by

you to acquaint yourselves with their minds. Be this, however, as it may, what I have been pleading for, is a main branch of our proper work, and the night cometh when we can work no longer. We stand too, at this present moment, as Paul did at Ephesus ; “ a great door and effectual is opened to us ” if we be zealous of our calling ; and at the same time “ there are many adversaries.”* If we care to serve God and our country, and to do good to the souls of men, we occupy a position in which we may do it. A large body, and I believe a growing body, of the honesty, and intelligence, and wisdom, and power, and true piety of the country, is with the national church and with her ministers. But many watch for our halting, and stand ready to avail themselves of our errors and neglects ; if any instrument lie unemployed by which we might build and plant, it will be seized upon to pull down and to destroy ; and if we give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, he will not pass it by. If our own rights are to be respected now, the correlative services must be strictly rendered ; and if our institutions are to stand, it must be through our making it unquestionable that too much good is done by them to be lightly hazarded. Compassed about, as we are, by so great a cloud of witnesses, we must not disappoint the

* 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

just expectations of our friends, nor suffer our foes to find us sleeping. We must “take heed to ourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,”*—for now, if ever, is the admonition seasonable—“See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” †

* Acts xx. 28. † Eph. v. 15, 16.

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THOUGHTS ON PAROCHIAL MINISTRATIONS

A C H A R G E

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF SALOP,

IN THE

DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD,

AT THE VISITATION IN JUNE, 1837.

BY

EDWARD BATHER, M.A.

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TO
THE CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS
OF THE
ARCHDEACONY OF SALOP,

This Charge,

PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS INSCRIBED

WITH MUCH RESPECT AND REGARD,

BY THE AUTHOR.

*Meole Brace,
August 1st, 1837.*

A CHARGE, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

The last time I met you here I delivered to you my thoughts on scriptural education, and on the importance of catechising as the best mode of preparing your several flocks to profit by your preaching. To-day I shall request your attention to a few remarks on some further particulars of our duty as parochial ministers.—For “the time is short,” my reverend brethren, and though there are many topics of temporary interest which might fitly as well as naturally engage our thoughts—yet I cannot but feel that however much the well-being of our church may be affected by the working of this or that Act of the Legislature—its stability, under God,

depends mainly on something else : “ We must take heed to the ministry, which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it.”*

Then, I trust, my reverend brethren, that I shall not be deemed presumptuous in the advices which I shall have to give. For though I speak before many, both my elders and my betters, the great majority here present are much my juniors—and four-and-thirty years’ experience in the charge of a populous parish, has at least made me acquainted with the evil consequences of many misapprehensions, as well as of much negligence of my own earlier ministerial life. A great deal which I have left undone, I would have you do : the snares into which I have fallen, I would have you escape : or, if I have seen the advantage of any particular course of conduct, I could desire that you should have the benefit of my testimony respecting it. Neither am I indeed under any serious dread of being accounted intrusive by you. It would be hypocrisy as well as ingratitude if I affected to doubt your confidence ; and besides this, there is an honest zeal to be useful, manifest now among the clergy generally, far beyond what was observable when I knew them first ; and the more heartily persons are engaged in an important work, the more ready will they ever

* Col. iv. 17.

be to listen candidly to an exposition of their obligations.

I refer you then at once to those of our ordination vows which relate to the ministrations required of us in the congregation and from house to house in our several parishes. On these heads we have all promised—"The Lord being our helper,"—first, "that we will give our faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God: so that we may teach the people committed to our cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same." And next, that we will "be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick, as to the whole within our cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given."*

Now I do not intend to speak of church discipline—neither can I enter into anything like a full discussion of the many other important particulars included in the words rehearsed; but I will briefly touch upon some chief points.

* Ordination Service.

Mark first, however, one or two things which relate to all our vows alike. "Will you give your faithful diligence?" it is asked—"will you be ready with all diligence?" This way of speaking implies that our calling is to nothing less than unremitting labour and circumspection: that having counted the cost carefully, we are honestly devoted to our work, so as to have laid it down as a principle, that all other things must yield to it. And doubtless particular admonitions can be of little use to any who view the ministry which they have received in any other light than this. However, "if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully."* Let us note, therefore, another thing which holds throughout. The demand is—"Will you teach the people committed to your cure and charge? Will you exhort and admonish within your cures?" The sphere of our operations and responsibility is defined. Nor can any arrangement be, in a general way, more conducive to edification, than that which assigns to each pastor his proper flock, and to each individual his proper pastor. And accordingly we stand pledged to two things: Not to interfere with the charges of other men, and actually to make ourselves acquainted, as far as possible, with every one of our own people.

* 2 Tim. ii. 5.

“ Entertain no persons (says Bishop Taylors, wisely), into your assemblies from other parishes, unless on great occasions, or in the destitution of a minister, or by contingency and seldom visits, or with leave : lest thy brother be discouraged, and thyself be thought to preach Christ out of envy, and not of good-will.”* On the other hand, we must not content ourselves with selecting some certain persons from among our own parishioners—whether for their readiness to receive us, or for their agreement with us in religious sentiment, or for any other cause—so as to bestow our attention upon them, to the comparative neglect of others. We are charged with the least hopeful, and the least respectful—with the ignorant, and the obstinate, and the scornful, and with those who are farthest off from the kingdom of God at present, as well as with those who have already entered. But many whom it is our duty to win to Christ, will assuredly be much grieved and offended by anything in our habits or behaviour which has an appearance of exclusiveness. Again, let us ever recollect the terms in which our promise of all faithful diligence was given. “ I will do so by the help of the Lord.” Might I ask a special blessing in order to the qualification of any of us for our

* Taylor, Advice to Clergy, § xxxvii.

ministry, it should be that the great apostle's saying might evermore be written on our hearts : " Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God."* For we have a great work before us, and we have need to be kept both from presumption and from fainting.

And now, *in the church or congregation* it is our office to pray with and for the people, to administer the sacraments, and to preach the word.

The *form of worship* is prescribed, and there can be no deviation from it. But still much rests with ourselves that the people may be edified. The grand point is, that the words be not merely articulately read, but that they be really prayed ; and therefore that we enter upon the work with very serious thoughts, set the Lord explicitly before us, and have the people upon our hearts, so as to be actually and earnestly begging a blessing for them. This will not fail to produce outwardly such a tone and manner as will tend much to excite a praying spirit in the congregation, and to prevent wandering and formality on their parts. And if, besides, we would sometimes expound the Liturgy, or parts of it, in our sermons, or catechetical lectures,—exhort the people to study it, and to bear their part orally

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

as well as mentally—and if, further, we would make a frequent practice of quoting it in our discourses, so as, by quoting, to illustrate and draw attention to it—besides the direct answer we should get to our own supplications and intercessions in the use of it, we should do much to help others to follow it and be engaged in it—to love it, and to profit by it.

For the *sacraments*—let me call your attention to one word of Bishop Horsley, which, though he is speaking principally of one of them, bears, in part, on both. “I am confident,” he says, referring to the Lord’s Supper, “that the oftener it is administered, the more numerous the communicants will be. But,” so he proceeds, “the frequency of the celebration will be of little use, unless your people are well instructed in the nature and use of this holy and mysterious ordinance. If they are suffered to consider it as nothing more than a rite of simple commemoration of Christ’s death—a mere external form of thanksgiving on the part of the receiver, they will never come to it with due reverence. You will instruct them, therefore, in the nature of a sacrament—that the sacraments are not only signs of grace, but means of the thing signified: the matter of the sacraments being, by Christ’s appointment and the operation of the Holy Spirit, the vehicle of grace to the believer’s soul. The

Lord's Supper is, in this sense, a sacrament in the very highest import of the word : for you will remember that the Church of England, although she reject the doctrine of a literal transubstantiation of the elements, which is taught in the Church of Rome, denies not, but explicitly maintains, that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper ; though they are taken after a spiritual manner, and the mean by which they are received is faith."*

I come now to *preaching*. Upon this I must dwell longer. Not because I would "compare one ordinance with another to the disparagement of either,"† but because we are more left to ourselves in this case, and there are, besides, some peculiar temptations to ensnare us, as well as some very serious difficulties in the work itself.

And here, my reverend brethren, though I am not altogether disposed to disagree with those who have advised young men to avail themselves of the written discourses of the learned and pious who have gone before them—yet I would observe, first, the assistance which the humble-minded will seek and which the wise may very well accept, is something very different from a general habit of subsisting on borrow-

* Charges, p. 161. * Taylor, Advice to Clergy, § lxiii.

ed stores, which I will take leave to say, is such a refuge of idleness as cannot but be very fatal to our usefulness. “The country parson hath read the Fathers and the school-men, and the later writers, or a good proportion of all, out of which he hath compiled a book and body of divinity, which is the storehouse of his sermons, and which he preacheth all his life, but diversely clothed, illustrated, and enlarged. For though the world is full of such composures, yet every man’s own is fittest, readiest, and most savoury to him.”* So writes the excellent Herbert—nor can I differ from him. For sure I am, the genuine fruit of a man’s own meditation and prayer, and search of God’s word, though in print it should very ill bear comparison with the writings of many others, will yet tell better, and be far more effective, than anything else, as orally delivered by himself to the people of his own charge among whom he is daily conversant. While, on the other hand, such as never write, will usually never study—and so will seldom acquire even as much knowledge of the christian scheme, as may enable them to judge of other people’s discourses, or to preserve, in their selections from them, such a consistency either of manner or statement, as may make what they preach profitable, or even intelligible to their

* Chap. v.

hearers. I assume, therefore, that whatever helps any may use, all will have something of their own continually in hand, which they are preparing for delivery from the pulpit, and upon which their minds are engaged.

As to the *matter* of our discourses, I need say very little. We are not mere expounders of morals, but ambassadors “for the one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus.”* And therefore our office is to testify that God is in Him, and in no other, reconciling the world unto himself, and to beseech sinners in his stead, that they would be reconciled to God.† But this evidently requires as full an exposition of duty as of doctrine, and as constant a call to practice as to faith. For clearly it behoves a mediator to be true to both the parties between whom he stands; and our Lord consequently would be much misrepresented, should our hearers be led to look upon him as being any more concerned for the good of man to procure his salvation, than for the honour of God to reduce the rebels against his authority to obedience. And, moreover, man must be made capable of supreme blessedness before he can enter upon it, which without holiness he cannot be; and must be exercised in holy duties, in order to his being brought to a holy state of

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. † See 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

mind. And accordingly the Lord has not only paid his ransom, but has procured for him the gift of the Holy Ghost—He is come, in a word, to “save him from his sins.”* What we have to propound as gospel, therefore, is this—that, “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”†

It is clear, further, that the preacher of this gospel has these two things to look to. First, and above all, he must “take heed to the doctrine,”‡ that he deliver his message fully and faithfully. And secondly, it must be his study to proceed in the delivery of it, in the way best adapted, under the divine blessing, actually to instruct and edify his hearers ;—in the doing of which last thing of course it is, that the skill of the preacher, as far as his work is an art, is shown.

As to the *first particular*—I will only observe here, that there is one grand obstacle, which by the grace of God we must overcome in the outset. We must put out of our minds altogether, all undue concern for finding acceptance and obtaining credit, either with our hearers in general or with any party. And this is not so easy as may be imagined, as every honest self-observer will confess. They who are bold in

* Matt. i. 21. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

rebuking vice, and faithful in the exhibition of *some* of the more unacceptable parts of doctrine, and who set light by the scorn of the ignorant and the worldly, may yet stand in awe far too much of those who are accounted the religious and the best informed ; and to preach “the truth as it is in Jesus,” in the whole length and breadth of it, is assuredly very seldom to be done without often startling, and sometimes much offending, even some pious and zealous people, and so getting for a time a bad name among them. The best have their prejudices—and multitudes have such partial views, and are so exclusively addicted to some school or other of religious teaching—which yet may be a good one in the main—that they do not know the truth for truth, if it be not stated in their own phrase. And they are besides so jealous, and on the watch, to see that one part of the divine word is not contradicted, that they cannot bear with the exposition of another which indeed is, though they know it not, as consistent with the former, as it is important in itself. But, “if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”* We must not dread being called the impugnors of this or that—of faith or works, grace or godliness—only, setting the “Lord alway before us,” we must see to it that we do

* 1 Pet. iv. 11.

not impugn either. And accordingly, in that language of common life which our hearers best understand, and in which all saving truth may be very well expressed, we must speak out, as far as the divine word conducts us, on all sides, and in all particulars—keeping back nothing that is profitable,* or commanded us.

Right views, however, and the ability to propound them, are different things, and they do not of necessity go together. “As a man may be a good lawyer, and yet not a good pleader, so may he,” says Bishop Wilkins, “be a good divine and yet not a good preacher.” It is matter of strict religious obligation, therefore, and a part of what we are bound to by our vow, that we take heed also to the composition and delivery of our sermons. And here much study and painstaking will be required. “The being able to make things plain to the meanest capacities,” which yet is what we have to do, “is no ordinary talent. The faculty of discoursing pertinently in a distinct method, and proper language, with as close reasoning as our hearers will bear, and no closer, is a very great perfection, not to be attained but by a clear understanding and solid judgment, improved by long exercise, and an intimate acquaintance with the best and most judicious authors.”† Most people, it is

* See Acts xx. 20. † Bp. Gibson’s Directions to his Clergy.

true, whose minds are full, have their happy moments, in which they think vigorously and write quickly ; but even the best furnished, and much more, the younger and more unpractised, do best, ordinarily, in proportion to the care and diligence which they bestow. Neither does the saying of this detract at all from our obligation to rely on divine grace. “ He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,”* no doubt. But yet to look for success in any other way than through God’s blessing on our honest labour, is not faith but presumption. And a gross abuse it is of scripture, to make the cautions respecting “enticing words of man’s wisdom,”† a pretence for carelessness. God may often choose the weak to confound the mighty ;‡ if he did not, it would be ill for the wisest of us ; but he requires of all that, “ whatsoever their hand findeth to do, they should do it with their might,”§ and no talent with which he has been pleased to furnish us may be hidden in the earth.

I shall now venture to make a few suggestions.

Though we are constrained to address a mixed auditory, there is yet no necessity that we should be either unintelligible to one class, or uninteresting to another. The religion of Christ is the common concern of all men. And there must

* Prov. xxviii. 26.

† 1 Cor. ii. 4.

‡ See 1 Cor. i. 27.

§ See Eccles. ix. 10.

be, and there surely is, a way of discoursing upon it, which will be found capable of reaching and properly affecting every honest mind. Let sublime truth only be stated as it is, together with the hearers' own concern in it, and if by clear arrangement and plain expression we can possess the most ignorant in our congregations with our exact meaning, people of true taste and sound judgment will be quite content. Deep disquisitions evidently are almost as much out of place as "doubtful disputations," where people are only met together to inquire what they must do to be saved, and have only need to be told, "This is the way, walk ye in it." And as to eloquence for the enforcement of what is said, though no doubt it tells where it bursts forth spontaneously, yet it is never needed—its effect is often questionable, and whatever it may be worth, it is never found by those who go out of their way to look for it. Insomuch that if in the revisal of our sermons we meet with any thing of this sort, which conscience tells us has been much laboured after, it will usually be best to follow that guide a step further, and erase it. For it is a pity to tempt weak people to be admiring our style, when they ought to be giving undivided attention to our message.

But let me now note a worse error. I fear it is sometimes thought that the great mysteries of

our religion are so above the capacities of the generality that they ought to be kept back from ordinary congregations, that the unlearned may not be drawn away from matters by which they might better edify. Doubtless many things there are which in one sense you cannot explain to the unlearned. But then in that sense you cannot explain them to any. But you can show to all that such and such things are actually set down in scripture as true and to be believed ; and then, in a way of explanation, what is wanted more ? If an ignorant person, for instance, cannot understand how Christ and his Father, being distinct persons, are one God, he can see that it is so said in words which will admit of no other construction ; and if so, he can believe it upon God's authority ; and if he can, he can also be instructed and comforted by it, and so get out of it that good which the revelation of it was intended to convey to him. He can see that " help is laid upon one that is mighty,"* and know to whom he commits his soul, and trust therefore and not be afraid, and " praise the Lord for his goodness," accordingly, " and for the wonders which he doeth for the children of men." And the learned, I presume, can get nothing better, though in pursuing his speculations he may lose, and often has lost, this bread

* Ps. lxxxix. 19.

of life. And so in other cases. If then, as behoveth us, we would "condescend to men of low estate;" let it not be by robbing them of any part of the revelation sent to all men, but only by a plain method of showing them just what that is which the divine record states.

Let all the grand doctrines therefore, as well as all the leading precepts be brought before the people in their turns. And especially, as Bishop Taylor advises, let care be taken "to explicate the mysteries of the great festivals—because," as he says, "these feasts containing in them the great fundamentals of our faith, will with the most advantage convey the mysteries to the people, and fix them in their memories by the solemnity, and circumstances of the day."*

As to the various methods of actually treating particular subjects, if I were competent to the discussion of them, the time would not permit me to enter upon it now. Bishop Wilkins, however, has stated his opinion, that no method is more useful for ordinary assemblies than the old one of proceeding expressly by way of "doctrine and use." To which Bishop Gibson adds, that "however the terms may be discontinued, the things never must, if we resolve to preach to the true edification of our hearers;" and I can-

* § lxi.

not but say, that I agree with both of them. Let the text then, or the proposition which it contains, be explicated in as few and easy words as may be, that the people may know what you would have them believe or do. Let that which has been stated be confirmed by such testimonies of scripture as evidently bear upon it, or by appeal, if needful, to common reason and experience, that they may see that it is not your own word, but his that sent you, which you have been delivering, and the word moreover which it is at once their duty and interest to receive. And then you are in a condition to make your application either for doctrine or instruction in righteousness, or in other words to make *use* of what you have explained and proved, so that, with all authority, you may exhort them to go and do thereafter, suggesting the proper motives to excite their affections, and directing them to prayer and calling upon God for strength. I will only add, in order to do all well and clearly, and to supply yourselves with good thoughts from the best source—having chosen your subject and made the proper and natural divisions of it in your own minds whether they are to be expressed or not, first consider each head separately, and make short notes of what occurs to you as fit to be said upon it; and next, note down in like manner what-

ever you can find by due search in holy scripture, that may in any way illustrate, explain, or enforce the several particulars; and having so got together and arranged your materials, begin actually to write. And no time, I can safely assure you, will be lost. Thoughts come quickly after we have settled what we are to think about, and the parts of a subject are distributed. And what is better, if you persevere in this course, every sermon you write will be a study of some point of divinity for yourselves. And you will find it a very different thing ere long, whether in writing you are expending your materials, or whether in order to writing, you are continually getting in fresh ones.

I have not entered upon the question respecting the comparative advantages of written and what are called extemporary discourses. Only as what I have said hitherto may be thought to apply chiefly to the former method, I will not pass on without saying a word or two to those who are disposed to adopt the other. Self-evidently there can be no situation in which it less becomes a speaker to be hasty and inconsiderate, than when he stands between Almighty God and immortal souls. By extemporary preaching, therefore, I presume nobody means the delivery of that which is absolutely unpremeditated. Mere words many may have at will,

and good thoughts may strike people in the act of discoursing, which they may at once clothe in words to the fuller illustration of their argument. But at least as much careful study of the subject and previous arrangement of the matter, is necessary here as is required for writing ; or the preacher will not be a safe instructor—nor yet will he be a master of the weapon which he has chosen for his work. In rash and unskilful hands extemporary discourse is often either immethodical and confused altogether, or else the method laid down is not preserved throughout ; and whichever be the case, the preacher not only becomes unintelligible, but he is liable to be actually misunderstood, to the people's great hurt. Or if the method be orderly, it is sometimes at the sacrifice of what really does arise in his mind during the act of speaking, and might have been uttered with energy and effect, had he not been afraid of losing his thread : and then certainly nothing is gained by the mode adopted. Statements, moreover, are frequently not made with precision, and truths are not as fully expounded and developed as they ought to be ; and if so, the congregation, however they may be occasionally excited, are not much instructed. Again, while parts of a discourse are finished and vigorous, others are inaccurately expressed and feeble—and so there is an inequality

and inconsistency, under which the hearer becomes wearied and inattentive. And some preachers, it is to be feared, without being aware of it, deliver, with few exceptions, the same sermon all the year round. For the moment they are at a loss they fall naturally into their ordinary common-places. I do not mean that much of this may not happen, in fact it does often happen, in the case of those who write their sermons—but such as take the other course are more exposed to it. And if they cannot in some tolerable degree overcome the difficulties in their way, so as to avoid flagrant failure in these respects, it will be better, for the present, to give this method up. If some of your people, my reverend brethren, should be weak enough to think that an extemporary preacher is necessarily more under divine guidance, and more piously dependent upon it than another, you yourselves are not of that mind. Abide, therefore, till more reading has made you fuller, and the habit of writing has taught you more order and exactness. And thenceforth, if you have command of language, you will improve in it, instead of being led astray by it. Your ready utterance will be “sound speech which cannot be condemned,” and the advantages, whatever they may be, of this method—and I am not disposed to overlook them—will be your own. The

speaker has a power, no doubt, at least over the affections of his auditory, which the mere reader can rarely reach.

I must add, let none make light of *Delivery*: many lose the advantage of great talents for want of little ones. The wise perhaps may not care much on their own account for utterance and intonation. But popular assemblies have always been greatly moved by them; and it is idle to argue against experience. At all events a defective articulation may be improved, and none should be above attempting it. Those who write their sermons may take care so to write that they may be able to read them without hesitation, and to look their hearers in the face the while, as if they were actually addressing them. All too may be in earnest, "speaking the truth in love," and if it be so, it will seem so. And this, with common care, though not without it, will sufficiently counterbalance many natural disadvantages.

Public ministrations, however, are but a part of our work. I come now to *what is to be done from house to house*.

Our vow implies that being resident within our cures, and accounting ourselves the "servants" of our people "for Jesus' sake," we have actually acquainted ourselves, not only with their persons, but as far as may be and is fitting,

with their general habits and ways of thinking, and that we are continually on the watch to avail ourselves of any special occasions of religious discourse, when they may be more than ordinarily open to right impressions.

Now all this, and whatsoever arises out of it, is, I would say first, in a good degree at least, very practicable.

In this district at least, the clergy are not usually oppressed by an overwhelming population. The majority of our parishes have not in each five hundred inhabitants—very few have fifteen hundred ; and as to the great towns, zealous people may commonly be found in them, to help us in many ways—in our schools for instance, or by acting in district-visiting societies—if we are but careful to select those who are really discreet and pious, and to maintain, for that also is very necessary, our own place, instead of suffering our subordinates to become our directors. And, again, the parochial minister stands everywhere on advantage-ground : whether we enter a house to exhort, or to comfort, to admonish or to rebuke, if we will go straight to our point, making no apology, as if our right could possibly be questionable, the people will look for none. They know our business, and our warrant, and respect—if it be not our own fault—our character and our office. We have but to be kind, as well

as faithful, therefore, and we shall rarely be repelled within our own cures.

Our dealing is to be with the *sick* and *whole*. As to the *first*, we must never excuse ourselves as if our ministrations were too late upon a death-bed. We know not that it may prove a death-bed ;—but be that as it may, here is an opportunity of a peculiar kind, and, whatever be the character of the parties, a work for us which we may not neglect. The best people are the humblest ; they will be the most thankful, therefore, for our prayers, and the most desirous of our assistance. Nor are they always exempt at such seasons from many alarms and disquietudes, which, though, perhaps, they indicate their sincerity to the by-standers, the word of consolation may be very necessary to compose and relieve. But to take the worst case, that of one who to the very time of what seems likely to be his last sickness, has gone on still in his wickedness ; a death-bed repentance is not in itself impossible—neither, granting it to be a repentance, may we presume to say it is unavailing. Appearances may be very bad, the case very far indeed from hopeful, especially if the dying man has had ample opportunities, and faithful warning, during health ; but still it is not for the minister of reconciliation to limit divine grace. Still you must bid him “ behold the

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"* and join your prayers with his own cries that God would change his heart, and help his unbelief ; and though it is no part of your duty, and would be no sign of your wisdom, to pretend to certify him as to what his faith may be, or whether the change is wrought, so as to pronounce on his final state, yet tell him, you must, that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost,"† and that, "all things are possible to him that believeth."‡

Great judgment and discrimination, however, are no doubt required always. And the method of addressing sick and dying people hath need to be specially and diligently studied. The office for the sick with which our church has furnished us, is indeed admirable, and may greatly help us—but it will not do all. Professedly and of necessity, it commits a great work to our own discretion—enjoining us, particularly to "examine" the sick person respecting his repentance, and on other heads—meaning, of course, that we should endeavour to make ourselves acquainted with his state—that so we may be able to advise and exhort upon it, as God and his word shall guide us.

I must confine myself, my reverend brethren, to a few very brief suggestions ; but I can-

* John i. 29. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Mark ix. 23.

not pass over altogether a matter of so much moment.

In our intercourse with the sick we have great need of all self-command. In *manner*, we cannot be too kind, or too composed and patient. It may be well and necessary to be short, but let there be nothing like haste or hurry, as if a minister of the gospel could have weightier occupation, or as if anything less weighty were, in fact, more upon his mind. People will not believe that we are indeed concerned for them, if we are soon weary of them : nor, supposing them capable of attention, may we honestly quit them before we have made them understand us, or at least done our utmost towards it.

It will lie with ourselves in most cases, perhaps, to begin the discourse. Or they may be so weak and ill, that we can only give our advices, and, committing them to God, depart. We need not think our labour lost if we can do no more. But we must get them to converse with us if we can, and listen to them quietly, leading them on step by step. Only seeing, above all things, that we be faithful in our replies, for our concern is not to bring ease, but healing. There are a set of people, however, very often met with and very difficult to manage, who will assent to everything we say. They are perhaps in some little awe of us, or they desire

to be thought well of—a desire of which man's heart is commonly quite as full on his death-bed, as at any other time ;—or they do not care to be troubled, and would take the civilest course to put us off. But we must not suffer them to deceive us or themselves, nor depart till we have seen something of what is in them. People ordinarily are not fond of opening their minds to a minister of religion before their own near relatives. It will be well then to discourse with sick persons, first, alone ; but, after that, let the family be called in. An address delivered to the hale and strong, at the bed of the dying, is not unlikely to have weight ; and often careless young people are present on these occasions, who have avoided you before, but under the influence of affecting circumstances will listen to you. A minister must not stay till he is sent for : if you know of the sickness by any means, God knoweth that you have had notice enough. Come as early in the sickness as you can, and at frequent intervals of its continuance. Should the party die, never omit an early visit to the surviving relatives. All people like such attentions, and the opportunity of making an impression is too suitable and obvious to be neglected. If the party recover, call upon himself. Let him be aware that you are on the watch to see whether your counsels have been of use—and whether

his professions have been made good. Urge strongly the danger of falling away from right convictions. Show people how certainly they will be the worse for what has befallen them, if they be not the better. It is a good time for furnishing the house with suitable religious tracts. The passages of scripture, too, which bear evidently upon the case should be diligently pointed out ; such, for instance, as the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree—or Christ's own words to the impotent man whom he had healed—"sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee ;" which are recorded, we may very well imagine, to furnish us with a special example that we should tread in our Master's steps.

But the visitation of the sick, it may be said, is, after all the pains that can be taken, too commonly a very unpromising, as well as a very arduous work. I grant it : sick people are feeble, irritable, and very little capable of attention ; and if they have the full use of their faculties, having, perhaps, wilfully stopped their ears against the truth in health, and hardened their hearts thereby, they are very often as cold and unimpressible and unwilling to think of their souls, as ever they were—so that frequently there is no awakening of them, and many drop off in much apparent unconcern.

Then look to your vow once more. You may

be constrained, without fault of your own, in some instances, to go to a sick bed as strangers. But it need not be so generally; nor will it, if you have taken heed to your obligations, as you are pledged. In that case, probably, you will have catechised the patient when he was a child—prepared him for confirmation—instructed him for the Lord's Supper—advised with him under providential distress or difficulty—or have reasoned with him on the error of his ways. Your voice then will not be strange to him; he is already accustomed to your manner, and has confidence in your good-will, and has perhaps actually learnt much from you, which, even if he has partially forgotten it, can easily be recalled; and if so, your work is half done. Then our knowledge that such sad cases as have been supposed are frequent, suggests assuredly a special and powerful argument for doing the work of an evangelist towards all whom we can approach, at once, and “while it is called to-day.”

Independently of this, however, now is the seasonable and accepted time both for ministers and for people. For we are sure of no other moment. And one thing required by our vow, remains especially to be noted, which of all others can least conveniently be postponed, and least hopefully be attempted on a sick bed. We have promised that we will be ready “to banish

and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word."

This refers of course to the direct inculcation of unscriptural views by preaching, or by books. And as with all charity, and due recollection that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,"* so likewise with all plainness and decision—such teaching, come it whence it may, must be opposed. The affectation of liberality is real cowardice and dishonesty. We must not let it be thought that we hold all zealous people in equal honour. We must be ready always, with "meekness and fear, to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in ourselves;"† and we must be ready also to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,"‡ against all gain-sayers, not seeking even peace itself, by compromise, or sacrifice of truth.

But this is not the whole which our vow requires. There are many false principles and popular errors, which though no sect owns them, do, in fact, possess the hearts and minds of multitudes of all persuasions, and are pleaded for and taught everywhere in effect, and acted upon to the ruin of immortal souls. Go where you will—among those who profess to be seeking life eternal, you will always find a large class

* James i. 20. † 1 Pet. iii. 15. ‡ Jude 3.

who desire two things—to be saved by their own righteousness, and yet to be excused from the keeping of the commandments : and these natural aspirations of pride and ungodliness lie at the root of a thousand wrong views, against which it behoveth you to be fore-armed. If, however, the multitudes who expect salvation for their own innocency—and those who explain away the divine precepts, and cannot distinguish between mere external decency and inward holiness,—the crowd who rest in good intentions and purposes of future penitence—those who look for exemption from punishment in the next world, for their sufferings in this—those who make a merit of some occasional attendance on outward religious ordinances, putting the means for the end—those who resolve everything into a confident appeal to Christ, as if, because his merits are infinite, nothing were required on any account from themselves—and those, who resting on what they call their good practice, think it no part of their duty to make themselves acquainted with the particulars of gospel truth ; if, I say, these and the like, were reasoned with in your visits from house to house, as occasion offered, in the time of their strength ; and the contrariety of their views to holy scripture, were duly pointed out, whilst, at the same time, all were exhorted to constancy in public worship, to

family prayer, and to common duties one towards another ; and were warned against common vices ; the chief that, by God's blessing, would remain of your duty towards them at their latter end, would be to comfort them with the comfort wherewith you yourselves are comforted of God.*

On the remainder of our ordination vows, my reverend brethren, I may not dwell at present, but the mere rehearsal of them will lead me to a proper conclusion of this address, inasmuch as they plainly set before us our church's views of the way in which we may be best prepared and strengthened for our work. As we have promised, we must " be diligent in prayer and in reading of the holy scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh." As we have promised, we must be " diligent to form and fashion ourselves and our families according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both ourselves and them, as much as in us lies, wholesome examples and patterns of the flock of Christ." As we have promised, it must be our habit " to maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in us, quietness and peace and love among all christian people ;" and inasmuch as grace is with the humble, and they are fittest

* See 2 Cor. i. 4.

to be guides who best know how to submit to discipline, we must, as we have promised, lastly, “reverently obey our ordinary and other chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over us, following with a glad mind and will, their godly admonitions, and submitting ourselves to their godly judgments.”* Doubtless, if any chief part of this be flagrantly neglected, our efforts as pastors and teachers, even if we persevere in making them, which is not likely, will be vain. But if our personal practice be as is here supposed, our ministerial duties, by God’s blessing, may all be done, if not perfectly, yet acceptably, to his honour and the good of souls. Doubtless to us, above all men, it is spoken, “My son, give me thine heart.”† The whole man is required for our Master’s service: but let the whole man be given, and the yoke will thenceforth be easy and the burden light. It is the “double-minded man,” who “is unstable in all his ways.”‡ When our part is once advisedly and resolutely chosen, our path thenceforth is plain. And awful as are our responsibilities, our situation has also its peculiar advantages. If we have many things to do, whichever of them we do well, it will help us in the doing of the rest. We are besides never more effec-

* Ordination Service.

† Prov. xxiii. 26.

‡ James i. 8.

tually employed for our flocks, than when we are praying and searching the scriptures for ourselves:—and on the other hand, all our direct works for our people have a tendency to draw our own souls to God. And finally, here is a consolation for every zealous and faithful labourer, of which he will surely feel the need, as infirmities accumulate and time advances. The constitution of our church has made us stationary. Suppose it that we have been exemplary in our station. Our bodily strength will no doubt decay, and our natural force abate, and the old man will not be what he was. But will he not be better? “The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.”* “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”† If that story be true which Jerome has told us of St. John,—could it have been an ineffective sermon which the holy man delivered, when in his extreme old age he was wont to go into the christian assemblies, and say only, “My children, love one another?” And with us likewise, what has been lost in active vigour, will have been gained in abiding influence. So that we shall bring forth more fruit in our age, and our words will have greatest weight when the tongue falters most that utters them.

* Prov. xvi. 31.

† Prov. iv. 18.

There is but one thing for us to look to, my reverend brethren, after this—that which indeed may anticipate and prevent it. I mean the final reckoning. “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give unto every man according as his work shall be.”* I trust this has been upon the minds of all of us—I trust it ever will be; the recollection of our obligations will then be cherished and habitual. We shall not covet or desire to stand excused in anything, nor cease our labour, care, and diligence, till (as our church commands) we have done “all that lieth in us, according to our bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to our charge, to that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there may be no place left among them for error in religion or viciousness in life.”†

* Rev. xxii. 12.

† Ordin. Service.

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A
C H A R G E .

REVEREND BRETHREN,

In looking at the printed charges which in past times have been delivered by those filling the station in the Church which it is my lot to occupy, it has been the custom, as you may have observed, of my predecessors, on such occasions as the present, to call the attention of the Clergy, to the examination of some theological principle, or maxim of ecclesiastical polity, rather than to questions touching the temporal rights of the Church or the constitutional immunities which she has enjoyed, as one of the estates of the realm.

But it is our fortune to live in times which allow to the clergy, little leisure for merely speculative discussions. So many propositions are afloat affecting the welfare of the Church, in her external relations, that a dissertation

From this place, on an abstract point of Divinity, would, I fear, hardly be in unison with the prevailing tone of feeling, either of your minds or of my own.

I have never taken a desponding view, as many of you, my reverend brethren, are aware, either of the present state or of the future prospects of the Established Church; nevertheless, as regards some particular measures which are now either in progress or under consideration, it is hardly to be supposed that any considerate man can weigh the possible results without anxiety. Great as may be the confidence which we ought to repose, and which I am sure we do repose, in the wisdom and piety of those to whose hands the government of the Church is entrusted, yet we cannot reflect upon the importance of the interests which are at stake, and remember at the same time, how often in human affairs the results of experience contradict the clearest theoretical calculations, without some painful misgivings: especially when we observe how many of the propositions to which these remarks refer, have been brought under deliberation, simply in deference to popular opinion. I would not be thought to undervalue the importance of popular opinion, properly so called. But popular opinion and public opinion are two very different things, though they are often mistaken for each other. Certain it is that the former, at least, ought never be taken

into the counsels of the nation, nor be made an argument for any changes, either in Church or State, the wisdom of which is otherwise uncertain.

I do not believe that the clergy, as a body, are opposed to what are called reforms in the Church; but it cannot be supposed that we shall be favourable to any changes which have their rise in mere political considerations; or in considerations indeed, of any kind, having any other end than that of promoting the great cause in which we have enlisted. We can never forget that the Church of which we are ministers, and the revenues with which she is endowed, are not to be regarded as belonging to a party, but only as means, under the divine blessing, for advancing the kingdom of our Heavenly Master. *That* is the test by which the wisdom of every ecclesiastical institution must be tried, and which must determine the character of every projected amelioration. It is under this trust that all the property of the Church is held; and so long as this important end is the single object which is proposed, so long as it shall be plain that God's glory, and the spiritual welfare of the great body of the people will be advanced, the clergy will have no right, as they will feel no disposition, to complain. They may or they may not suffer loss or detriment, as individuals, under the changes which are contemplated; but in any

case, I think I am expressing your opinions as well as my own, when I say, that in estimating the prudence of those changes, this is not the consideration which ought to be chiefly in our thoughts.

It will be perceived, that in these remarks my thoughts have been principally directed to the Report of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The measures there suggested for the benefit of the Church, come recommended to our acceptance by names which we all love and venerate; and possessing an authority which alone would dispose us to receive with approbation every plan of improvement coming from such a quarter, even in the absence of any appeal to the convictions of our judgment. But there are other propositions affecting the Church, which have been brought under the consideration of the legislature, by parties in the country, to whose views and opinions, apart from the reasons adduced in support of the measures which they advocate, we cannot be supposed, as churchmen, to pay any particular deference. Two measures, in particular, may be selected, as coming under this description to which I feel called upon to point your attention, for reasons which I shall explain as I go on. These are, "The Bills for the better Registration of Births, Burials, and Marriages," and for the "Abolition of Church Rates."

To begin with the former of these:---I am

not prepared to say that there may not have been deficiencies in the mode of registration heretofore adopted, considered in respect of statistical science or of legal evidence, such as required correction---that is not a subject on which I am competent to speak; but I can very confidently say, that if either of these important ends had been the object desired, the legislature would only have had to point out in what way the services of the clergy could have been made more available, and they would have been cheerfully afforded without fee or reward.

But there is no person so unobservant of passing events as not to know that the aim of the Bill which was introduced into Parliament last Session, on this subject, had no purpose of this kind in view. As regards the former of these ends, it holds out no promise of advantage, except it be the obtaining a more correct record of the number of births and deaths which take place in that section of the community which has separated from the National Church. And with respect to the latter, that is, the important object of tracing descents, it is not enough to say of this Bill, that it promises no advantage; but, so far as its provisions will be operative at all, the change is undeniably for the worse. It would be easy to shew this, if it would answer any useful purpose to do so; but it would be a waste of time, seeing that the true object of this Bill was one much more easy to

attain than the correction of any defects in the established system of Parochial Registration, namely, to pay a compliment to our dissenting brethren.

That this and this only was the real design of the new regulations, is plain upon the very face of the Bill; for it does not affect any other members of the community; *they* are to be baptized and buried, and married the same as heretofore; and the register of these events is still to be kept by the clergy, substantially under the same forms as they have been employing. The changes introduced concern the dissenters and the dissenters only; and all the machinery which is to be set in motion---including a registrar-general and deputy registrars, and deputy deputy registrars, and offices to be built, and various other charges, to the amount if I am rightly informed, of about £70,000. per annum:---the expense of all this machinery is to be devoted to the convenience, I repeat, of the dissenters only: the members of the Church, under a special clause in the Bill, being exempt from its provisions: it being well understood that without this exemption, it never would have passed into a law. The only party then, in the state whose wishes have been considered in the changes to which I am here alluding, are the dissenters. And what is the benefit which it confers on them? This question is important, because if the majority of the people of England

are to make a sacrifice of any kind, for the benefit of a particular portion of the community, the nature and amount of the benefit to be conferred, must form the ground on which any such concession can be demanded. What then is the relief which the dissenters seek, and which under this Bill, is to be granted? The dissenters were as much at liberty to be baptized by their own teachers, and to be buried in their own places of interment, and to go through any nuptial ceremony they might prefer at their own places of worship, and to register all these acts, in books of their own keeping, before the passing of this Bill as since:--the single advantage they obtain under this Act, which they did not possess before, is, that a functionary of the Board of Guardians may be substituted by them for an ordained minister of religion, as the required witness to the marriage contract.

The value of this privilege is no concern of ours: but, whether it be great or small, surely the expense consequent upon the costly and cumbrous machinery which it requires, ought to have been borne by those alone, who alone are to enjoy it. Had it been a question in which the spiritual interests of a large body of the people were concerned, though they were not the largest body, the case would then have assumed another character; for whatever will benefit any one member of the body politick, is for the advantage of the whole. And on this sup-

position I should not have adverted to the topic of expense, had it been really great, instead of being, as it is, not worthy of a moment's consideration. The point, however, to which I am inviting your observation is this :--that small as the amount may be which the members of the Church will be individually called upon to pay, under this New Registration Bill, it will be larger in the gross amount than the whole contribution of the dissenters towards the Church Rates. And since they consider it so great a grievance to pay for the maintenance of churches which they do not use, surely we may also feel the same in paying £1000. a-year to a registrar general, and proportionate sums to clerks and deputy registrars, in addition to a large annual outlay for other purposes besides, not *one* of which purposes can properly be said to have so much as even the pretence of being for the general benefit. Under this New Bill, in order to protect dissenters from the grievance of being married according to the rites of the Church of England, members of the Church will be called upon to pay, out of the consolidated fund, a sum exceeding in amount by very nearly £30,000. per annum, the whole of the contribution which, under Lord Althorp's Bill, the dissenters would have had to pay towards the Church Rate. If they consider it so intolerable a burthen upon the conscience to contribute any thing towards the public worship

of God except in a meeting-house, we may reply that it is equally a burthen upon our consciences to contribute any thing towards the solemnizing marriages any where except in a Church. It would, I admit, be unworthy of men of sense, to speak of this as a *religious* grievance ; but such language would be as near the truth in our mouths as in that of our adversaries.

When the dissenters complained of the principle involved in Lord Althorp's Bill, it was answered, (and the answer was surely founded on reason,) that in every community, individuals must submit to be taxed for various purposes which are required for the general good. The convenience or opinion of the minority, in the question of providing religious instruction for the great body of the people, as in many other questions, must yield to that of the majority. But in this Bill an inversion takes place of the usual principle ; it is the majority who are taxed for the minority ; and this not for any practical benefit which the minority are seeking to obtain : (for on that supposition, as I before observed, the case might be very defensible :) but to redress a grievance, which, if it be one, has existed more than 300 years, without having ever been discovered by those whom it oppressed.

I have been led into these remarks upon the New Registration Bill, not for the sake of an

opportunity of recriminating upon our dissenting brethren, but for a purpose which I shall immediately explain. The objections which I am about to urge against it, are not founded upon its defects, considered in reference to the objects for which it was intended; and still less are they founded upon pecuniary considerations; but upon the evils which it may hereafter create, when taken in conjunction with another measure that has been brought before the country, and to which I shall now direct your attention. His Majesty's present Ministers speak of this Bill, and the still more important proposition for the abolition of Church Rates, as "healing measures;" and no doubt such is their opinion: but these are not times in which to accept men's opinions without examination: and before the law of the land upon these subjects is finally and irrevocably changed, it may be well to pause and to satisfy ourselves that such is really the character of the propositions in question.

If we look back to the history of the great separation from the Church, in the time of the Commonwealth, we shall see that the original grounds of that unhappy schism did not regard differences of opinion which no lapse of time could reconcile, but points which derived their chief importance from the angry passions of mankind; and which differences accordingly, as these passions subsided, also died away. The

dissenters indeed continued to disclaim the advantage of a government by bishops, and of set forms of prayer, and to disapprove of the use of the surplice, and of the sign of the cross in baptism; but they had ceased to speak of these things as *unlawful*; and the Church, on the other hand, at the same time that she maintained the superior authority of her own platform, fully recognized the right of private judgment on these as on all other points. In the mean time, the Church had submitted to regard those who had deserted her communion, not as formal schismatics, but rather as wanderers from her fold. Her doors were left open to all comers; no rebuke was given to those who left her communion, no inquiries pressed upon those who returned; though not counted in the number of her members, yet were they still united with her, not only in the acknowledgment of a common Head, but in the bonds of a common Protestantism. And though we may have thought that some preached Christ of envy and strife, yet others, we felt sure, did so of good will; but still, whether in pretence or truth, we could not doubt that Christ was preached: and therein, at least, the good and pious among us, of whatever party or denomination, could unite in rejoicing. It is true that many grounds of jealousy and collision still remained; but they were the result of outward circumstances,

rather than of religious feeling; and such as they were, they were confined to the clergy, on one hand, and the ministers among the dissenters on the other :--they had no perceptible influence upon our respective flocks, who regarded each other as one people, divided rather by a difference of opinion as to the forms of religious ordinances, than by any separation of principle in fundamental truths.

This state of things, it is true, exists no longer. I am not able to state what the provocation was, for I never heard of any; but, suddenly, the dissenters, for some cause, which I cannot explain, appear to have felt dissatisfied with their position; and, in placing themselves in array against the Church, they have not revived an old quarrel, but they have made a new one; placing the question in dispute between them and us, on grounds which were not only unknown to former times, but which, would seem to engage them in a conflict of which it is impossible to foresee any termination. It is not against any particular practice or doctrine that they protest; it is not any definite form of Church government which is denounced; but they tell us that "a State establishment of Christianity, under *any* form or shape, is a crying abomination, a daring encroachment upon the prerogatives of heaven."--"If," say they, "a Church, the greatest and best that ever existed;--if a Church dis-

tinguished by the purity of her doctrine, the sanctity of her discipline, the apostolic splendour and devotedness of her ministry;--if a Church, unrivalled for the glory of her various institutions were this day established--we should remain what we now are, conscientious dissenters.”*

Accordingly, “DELEND A EST CARTHAGO” is the motto now inscribed on their banners; and the sentiment is repeated not merely in their newspapers and public meetings, but in their periodical publications; and even in tracts and pamphlets and sermons, inscribed with the names, I regret to say, of some of the most eminent of their preachers.

Now, it must be evident, that if we may assume this language, as expressing the views and sentiments generally entertained by our opponents, the obstacles to any future approach, either on their part or ours, towards kindly feelings or mutual understanding and co-operation on almost any point, would appear to be quite insurmountable. But we may surely hope that such language will be disavowed by all the more respectable portion of the dissenters; that it expresses the sentiments only of a section of their body; and even in their case, that it is too

* See a valuable pamphlet, entitled “Ecclesiastical Establishments not inconsistent with Christianity,” by William Hall, from which these extracts are taken.

exaggerated and unreasonable to be permanent. We may surely hope that the time will not be long before a large number of those who are now joined together in such bitter hostility against the Church, will regret the violence into which they have been drawn, under the excitement of political agitators; (who have religion in their mouths, but far other objects in their thoughts;) unless the return to a more christian temper is prevented by some act of mistaken interference on the part of the legislature; such, unhappily, as there is but too much reason to apprehend. An ample foundation of evil, is laid in this new Registration Bill; but at present the mischief is not actual and positive, but only possible and prospective:--let, however, the petition of the dissenters, for the Abolition of Church Rates pass into a law, and there is too much reason to believe, as I shall proceed to explain, that the door to any future intercourse between us and them, of a religious kind, may, perhaps, be shut for ever.

It is said that the Abolition of Church Rates is the first step towards a separation between Church and State. A step to that event, it certainly would be, and perhaps an important step: but that is not the point, at present, before us; that which I wish to make more fully understood, is, the tendency of this measure to widen, almost beyond the hope of remedy, the present separation of religious parties in the country;

and to aggravate, in a degree which it is difficult to calculate, the evils which it inflicts upon society. From the moment that all who differ from the Church shall cease to contribute towards her support, the chief and almost the only remaining bond of christian fellowship, which at the present time subsists between us, will be broken in two, with no hope, that I am able to perceive, of its replacement. I know not whether our dissenting brethren have contemplated this result; but if they have not, perhaps they may still see reason to pause and reflect before they reduce things to an extremity which I cannot but think that no man of a truly christian spirit would willingly accelerate.

The New Registration Bill, left to its own single operation, unless I am greatly mistaken, will be, as to any practical result, a dead letter; but connect it with the Abolition of Church Rates, and it assumes a much more effective character. For what will be the case? From the time that this cess shall be paid only by members of the established religion, those who have withdrawn from her communion will no longer have any claim to a seat in our vestries, nor to interment in our church-yards, nor to the ministrations of the clergy in any shape. I would not be understood as anticipating an immediate refusal on the part of the clergy to officiate at the marriages and burials and baptisms of dissenters, but only that, in point of

fact, it will be a matter of grace and favor on their part: a service which in mere reason and equity, they will have an undoubted right to refuse: a privilege which the dissenters will evidently not be able to demand as of right: and therefore one, which after the language they have employed, both in their writings and public meetings, I am induced to suppose, it is not likely they will submit to accept. If there be so great an impropriety in making the dissenters contribute towards a Church which they do not use, the objection is no less to their claiming the use of a Church, towards which they do not contribute. And even, (which we cannot suppose,) if the inconsistency of this should not be seen by themselves, yet those upon whom the burthen will then exclusively devolve, may reasonably be expected to entertain a different opinion: so that I think I may assume that in the event, the result will be as I have stated.

So long as the old Marriage Act continued in force, a clergyman could not refuse to officiate at the marriage of a dissenter; because the law, except in the case of Quakers, refused to sanction any marriage not solemnized by a clergyman. And in like manner, so long as the law respecting Church Rates shall continue on its present footing, the use of the Church for every purpose which the law allows, may be claimed by every one; as all now contribute to its support. But all this is to be changed:--all these common

ties and mutual rights are for the future, it seems, to come to an end. Hereafter in all that concerns the service of our Heavenly King, the dissenters and ourselves are to be two people. A seal is to be affixed to that unhappy schism which has for so many generations divided the Church of Christ in these kingdoms, by breaking asunder the only remaining links which subsisted among its members; and this we are told is to be a "healing measure!" A healing measure it may be, perhaps, in that sense in which the amputation of a diseased limb is a healing measure; but in no other sense ought it to be so described.

When the temple was built upon Mount Gerizim, the people of Samaria were, it is probable, instructed to consider it as "a healing measure;" for they also were thenceforth to be relieved from the burthen of contributing to a place of worship which they did not frequent. The result, however, was, as we are told, that thenceforth "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans." So far as religion is concerned, such, there is reason to think, will be the direct effect of the relief which the dissenters are demanding: let us hope that the omen may be averted, as regards the social charities of life.

In what has now been said, I have considered the state of things likely to arise out of these two measures, simply as a Christian, and without any calculation of the effects to be produced

by them upon the interests of either party, on the narrow principles of a sectarian policy. The dissenter, however, is mistaken, I apprehend, if he supposes that even on this low principle, the Church is the party which would be the chief loser, under the circumstances I have been describing. It may be true that an exemption from Church-rates might tempt some to the meeting-house, who would otherwise have adhered to their own communion:--and, doubtless, such a snare ought not to be laid before the consciences of men:--but such occasional non-conformists would form no very brilliant accession to the ranks of our adversaries, and cause but little loss and less discredit to our own. This evil, however, such as it is, would, I think, be more than compensated by correcting some disadvantages which the Church has laboured under, arising out of that unlimited and indiscriminate toleration which she has heretofore exercised. This might be shewn in many points of view; but there is one more especially, which I shall name--and that is, that if this important change in our ecclesiastical system shall be carried into effect, we shall have, for the future, a security which we have never before possessed, against an evil of perpetual occurrence--I mean, the disposition of so many persons among us to consider a separation from the Church, not as a violation of communion, but simply as a change in their place of worship.

The majority of mankind are more affected by visible distinctions than by differences on matters of opinion. And when those who have been educated in the bosom of the Church, shall hereafter find, that to leave her communion will draw with it a renunciation of all the rites of the Church : rites associated in a peculiar degree, with all the best and tenderest feelings of our nature, and to which the great body of the people are attached, from long and immemorial usage, if from no other motive :-- they will at least *reflect* before they quit the religious profession of their fathers ; and require better reasons for the sacrifices they must make, than those which now, for the most part, decide their choice.

I have to apologize to you, my Reverend Brethren, for the length to which these remarks have extended ; but having said thus much to you, on the general policy of Church Rates, I must, I fear, still further intrude upon your time and patience, while I address a few observations to the Churchwardens on the present state of the law, as affecting this important question ; and I am the rather induced to do so, because the particular view of the subject which I have always taken, appears to have escaped attention.

The question is : supposing the majority of the parishioners assembled in vestry to refuse a rate for the necessary repairs of the Church,

which they are by common law obliged to maintain, is there any power of compelling them to perform this duty? This is the question; but the point commonly put, is very different from this--namely, whether, in the case where a majority of the parishioners have refused a rate, the Churchwardens, possess the power, under their own authority, of making one?

Now about this last point, there are many and serious doubts; but about the former, my opinion (which, however, you will receive, Gentlemen, with due allowance, remembering that my profession is not that of a lawyer,) is, that there are not any.

It is admitted on all hands that it is the duty of the Churchwardens to repair the Church, and that they are responsible to the ordinary for the performance of this duty. The Churchwardens are likewise, in the first instance, (as is not denied,) the judges, both as to the necessity and the extent of the repairs required, as also of the amount of the rate which is to be levied. But is it to be inferred, therefore, that the parishioners have no voice in these matters? That surely would not be agreeable to reason, nor is it, I apprehend, agreeable to law. In case the parishioners, assembled in vestry, should think the repairs not necessary, or too extensive, or the estimate too high, they have no doubt the power of withholding their

sanction, not as against the principle of a rate, but as against the judgment of the Churchwardens in this particular case, who, in such circumstances, must appeal to the ordinary. The real question, then, is, whether in this supposed case, the refusal of the parishioners, can be pleaded as a bar to such repairs, when ordered under the authority of the Archdeacon? This appears to me to be the true question. It is not, as is commonly stated, a question between the parishioners and the Churchwardens, but a question between the parishioners and the Archdeacon. And putting the case in this way, it is one, Gentlemen, on which I feel myself entitled to speak with some confidence, because since my appointment to the office which I have the honor to hold, I have twice brought the question to issue as far as I could, and on both occasions my authority was affirmed.

At the first Parochial Visitation, which I held at Coggeshall, the orders which I left behind me with the Churchwardens, were disputed in the vestry. The Churchwardens appealed to me for advice. Thereupon, I renewed the orders which I had before given them, and desired them to take the dissentients into the Ecclesiastical Court:--at the same time putting into their hands a written guarantee, purporting to bear them harmless against all costs, in case the decision of the Court should not be in their favour.

On this, a second vestry was summoned; and it was agreed to take the opinion of a certain learned judge (who at that time was *not* the member for the Tower Hamlets:) and *then*, his opinion was, that the parishioners of Coggeshall must submit to the orders of the Archdeacon: which accordingly was done.

The next case, Gentlemen, was that of Wix, in the Tendring Hundred. Here the parishioners did not refuse to repair the Church, but denied my authority to compel them to appoint Churchwardens. I directed a vestry to be called for the purpose of taking the sense of the parish upon the question; which was assembled accordingly, and the majority came to a determination not to admit my authority, nor comply with my decree.

As Churchwardens are considered to be civil and not ecclesiastical officers, I was in this case compelled to proceed against the parish in the Courts of Common Law. I applied, therefore, for a mandamus, which was granted accordingly; and the result was, that Churchwardens were forthwith appointed.

Now, Gentlemen, I consider that though the first of these cases, does not affirm the power of the Churchwardens to levy a rate, under their own authority, yet it goes to establish that authority, upon an appeal to the Archdeacon.

And the second case, is also clear to the point, that the common law of England, which

calls upon all parishes to repair their Church, and for this purpose to elect Churchwardens, cannot be defeated simply by the non-consent of the Parishioners.

Having stated thus much, Gentlemen, I will not detain you longer, except to say, that I hope, by the blessing of God, to hold a Parochial Visitation, in the Archdeaconry, next year, preparatory to the Bishop's Visitation; and when that time comes, if the law remains upon its present footing, I shall be found ready to try the question here considered with any parish, that shall think fit to demur to my authority.

A
C H A R G E

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF WILTS,

JUNE, MDCCCXXXVII.

BY

WILLIAM MACDONALD, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF WILTS.

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A

CHARGE,

&c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

OF all the institutions of this long favoured country, no one excites so much interest at the present moment, or occupies so much of the attention of the community, as the Church,—that branch of the Catholic Church of Christ, established by law in this kingdom.

To invigorate its existing power, to add to that power, and increase its means of promoting the temporal and eternal peace and happiness of the inhabitants of this country, and of carrying the words of truth and salvation to every corner of the world, is the anxious desire, the fervent prayer, and the earnest endeavour of many of her dutiful and grateful children, sincere worshippers of their God and Saviour,

in every part of this kingdom. Whilst this is the glorious object of the desires and endeavours of many of her children, it cannot be denied that some of them are perverse, disobedient, and rebellious ; and that her enemies are numerous and eager to set their feet upon her neck, to deprive her of her rights and privileges, and to lay her beauty and her honour in the dust. Of these, some are open and undisguised in their hostility, and, consequently, though vehement in their vituperation, and unscrupulous and unsparing in their efforts to accomplish her downfall, are more easily met, and more successfully opposed ; and, God be praised, the Church of England has never wanted champions competent to wield the well-tempered sword, and hold up the thick-bossed shield which her armoury provides for her defence. Some, on the contrary, and they a crafty band, spread their ambushes on every side, and endeavour to carry by feint and stratagem, the citadel which they are afraid or ashamed to assail by a direct and unmasked attack ; who, under the pretext of doing service to the Church and Religion, would strike from under them their chief temporal supports, endeavouring with deceitful lips to persuade us that such aids are not needed, and that, instead

of supporting, they tend only to weaken the building. When the Infidel, the Papist, and the Unitarian, the Anabaptist, and the Independent, all combine to do a deed of loving-kindness to our Church, we may then begin to suspect the nature of that intended kindness, without committing any breach of the "charity which thinketh no evil."

But on the open or disguised attacks of the enemies of the Church, it is not my intention to dwell: it is never an agreeable, though sometimes a necessary task to refer to the hostile conduct of those who dissent from us. I think that it will be more conducive to the promotion of the great and momentous object we have in view, if I call your attention for a short space to what appears to me to be one of the best modes of upholding the Church in its integrity and influence; and of strengthening the hands of the friends of true Religion at this great crisis.

The press has teemed with schemes for giving increased efficiency to the Church of England; and so accessible has intelligence of whatever is written or spoken become to almost every one, that it would be both a waste of time, and a trial of your patience to particularise them, or to notice them further than to observe, that

some are impracticable, and others of so doubtful a character as not to be adopted without the greatest caution, if adopted at all. Neither shall I trouble you with any analysis of Bills introduced into Parliament, relative to ecclesiastical affairs, experience having sufficiently proved the uncertainty of their ever becoming laws, or at least without undergoing very great alteration. Let me remark at the same time, that all Bills, the contents of which may come to your knowledge, projecting alterations in the state of the Church, should receive your attentive consideration ; and that whenever you find in them any provisions which you may consider as oppressive to the Clergy, or injurious to the real interests of the Church, you will do well to call the attention to them, either of those in authority, or of such of your friends and neighbours as in your estimation may be influential towards the correction of such faults.

But though I have no intention of entering on the discussion of other matters in which the Church is particularly concerned, and which may occupy the attention of the Legislature, yet, considering that I am speaking to the Clergy, in the presence and hearing of those who have the immediate charge of the fabrics of

the Church, I may reasonably be expected to say a word or two on the much agitated question of Church-rates. I would observe, then, that however desirable it may be to put an end, by some wise measure, to those unhallowed bickerings which, to the utter disgrace of religious professors, and to the grief and horror of all really religious and conscientious persons, so frequently take place in large towns, or where dissent prevails ; and however much this state of things is to be lamented, the proper remedy is not to be found in an act of injustice ; and any resolution to exonerate one species of property, or any person in respect to a particular property from a charge to which, from the first establishment of a Christian Church in this country, it, or the possessor of it, has always been liable by law, and lay it on another which was given for, and dedicated to other purposes, seems both unjust and perilous ¹.

¹ Upon the same principle as that which assumes the right on the part of the State, to take under its management the property of the Church, all corporate property may be taken possession of, and administered according to the will of the ruling party of the day ; and the chief reason why Church property is more likely to be seized than any other, is, that it has fewer defenders ; the Church being, in fact, unrepresented in the House of Commons. The project is fraught with peril ;

With regard to the alleged impossibility of executing the law, I humbly yet confidently submit, that it is an anomaly which does not exist in the laws of England, that a party shall be bound by law to keep a building in repair, and yet, if he choose, to let that building fall to the ground there is no law to compel him to keep it up. That such a power does exist, there is no doubt, though its action be somewhat cumbrous and troublesome. How, then, may this power be exerted ? and how may a rate for necessary repairs be made and enforced ?

A rate for necessary repairs may be enforced in the Ecclesiastical Courts, by two modes of

for when once the democratic party begins to interfere with property of any kind, save that which comes *immediately* from the pockets of the people (which Church property does not), it is not easy for any one to say where they will stop. It tends but little to abate our fears, to be told that the supposed surplus revenue is to be managed by a body of Commissioners, among whom it is proposed to place some dignified ecclesiastics. These Commissioners will be nominated by the Prime Minister ; and in these days he is more or less under the influence, or at least obliged to guard against the opposition of that party which makes no secret of its hostility to the Church. I say this without reference to any administration in particular : for with party politics I have nothing to do.

The scheme proposed for the better management of Epis-

proceeding, viz.—1st. A criminal proceeding by articles against the parishioners, individually, as for an offence, in neglecting or refusing to make a rate. 2d. A civil proceeding by monition, to make a rate. In the first case, the Ecclesiastical Court, as a punishment for their neglect, might proceed to excommunicate them ; under which sentence they may be imprisoned for six months. In the second case, the Court would monish the parishioners generally : that monition would be personally served on certain of the inhabitants : if they disobeyed and shewed no sufficient cause, they would be pronounced in contempt ; their contempt would be signified into the Court of Chancery, and the *writ de contumace capiendo* would issue, by virtue of which they would be

copal and Cathedral property, and for charging that property with the repairs of Churches would, if carried into effect, confirm and extend the stipendiary system already begun under what seemed favourable auspices. It is for this reason a perilous project ; for, let Bishops, Deans and Prebendaries once become stipendiaries, and they may soon be at the mercy of a party which will first begin to think of the propriety of diminishing the stipends, and applying the savings to other state purposes ; and ultimately reduce them to a bare subsistence. Let what has recently been done in Spain afford an example and a warning.

committed until they submitted. This, undoubtedly, is cumbrous machinery ; but it is effective ¹.

With regard to the project of transforming the care of the fabrics of the Churches from the parishioners, to a body of Commissioners in the metropolis, it is to be feared, that if ever this should happen, many a Church will remain in a state of dilapidation long before a grant can be obtained for repairing it. Some better plan must be devised for obviating the difficulties acknowledged to exist, before the Church can consent to relinquish those ways and means, which have for eleven or twelve centuries been available to the maintenance of ecclesiastical edifices. But to leave a subject which has undergone the amplest discussion, and in which the opponents of Church-rates have already had much the worst of the argument ², and to go to the more immediate subject of my address.

There is, my Reverend Brethren, one mode of rendering the Church more effective of the great end of her establishment, which is perfectly safe,

¹ See Nicholl's Pamphlet in answer to that of the Attorney General.

² Whoever wishes to see this matter set in a true light, may consult Mr. Hale's Tract, or that of Mr. Ralph Barnes, or Deacon's Answer to Sir J. Campbell.

and which, though sufficiently obvious to every considerate mind, does not seem to receive so much attention as its great importance demands, and on which I purpose now to touch, and that is, *union amongst ourselves*.

“It is well,” says an eloquent member of our profession ¹, “when men are occupied in repairing and re-modelling the institutions of the Church, in removing every unsightly excrescence upon her surface, that every blemish may be removed which would mar her fair beauty, and prevent her from becoming in the eyes of all, ‘a glorious Church, having neither spot nor wrinkle;’ but no such occupation, however laudable, can atone for our neglect of interior unity.” To this I doubt not you will all subscribe: there will be no difference of opinion as to the importance of the thing. It is only as to the mode and the means of attaining to it, that any difference of opinion may be expected.

Now, as it appears to me, the unity which is necessary for the effectual performance of the duties and functions of the Church, is to be exercised in three modes,—viz: unity of spirit ², unity

¹ Mr. Eden, C.C.C. Oxford.

² Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude.

of doctrine, and unity of action ; all “joined and fitly framed together¹,” to constitute one compact and powerful union. If either of these constituent parts of the machine be wanting, the others will be comparatively powerless even whilst they cohere ; and that will not be long— all three are essential to its effectual operation, and neither of them can be removed or injured without materially impeding its action.

First then, we must “stand fast in one spirit.” But what is this spirit ? It is the spirit of love— love to Christ, and love to man ; filling us with the determination “to strive together with one mind,” to diffuse the light of the glorious Gospel over all nations, and more especially and immediately to promote the faith of Christ among the people whose appointed pastors we are ; and “to love as brethren for their works’ sake,” those who are engaged in the same high and holy duties.

This spirit should pervade all ranks and degrees in the Church ; and no unworthy jealousy of those in higher offices, or enjoying greater emoluments than ourselves, should ever be permitted to interfere with, or damp it. All are working

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10.

together, we hope and fully believe at this moment, in their various stations, with unexampled zeal for the faith of the Gospel; and the distinction which it has sometimes been attempted to draw between working and unworking Clergy, is as destitute of foundation, as it is mischievous and invidious, and those who work hardest, will be the last to countenance or encourage it. It is an "invention of the enemy," calculated, and perhaps intended to disturb, that unity of spirit which it is so desirable to infuse and cherish, amongst all ranks and stations in the Church.

If the Clergy be not actuated by this one spirit, if they be not *συνψυχοι* joined together in one soul, it is not probable that they will ever combine their strength and their resources in one grand continuous effort to counteract the machinations of the arch-enemy of God and man. These machinations, whatever form they are made to assume, are, under God, to be most effectually counteracted by a united band of well-disciplined soldiers in the Christian army. To cherish this spirit therefore of mutual support, and to grow in it, should be the first and greatest object with those who are in more especial degree "of the household of God ¹."

¹ Ephes. ii. 18, 19.

Having all imbibed this same spirit, being all united by the bands of mutual affection, the ministers of Christ are more likely to be of "one mind" in doctrine, and to "speak the same thing." And as unity of counsel in the commanders is essential to the success of an army, unity of doctrine is no less important for the furtherance of true religion, than unity of spirit. It is not the authority and the influence of the Church of England, that are alone concerned in her ministers preaching the same doctrine, and "holding fast the same form of sound words;" but the cause of the Christian religion of which that Church is the "pillar and ground," that must suffer, if there is not unity of doctrine amongst those who are set apart by authority to preach the Gospel to the people. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" If the soldier receive contradictory orders in the day of battle, he is thrown into confusion, and is in the greatest danger of falling a prey to the enemy. If uneducated persons, or people much engaged in worldly business, and in earning their daily bread by manual labour, hear one interpretation of the word of God to-day, and have a different view of the same passage opened to them the next; what

can be the consequence but want of confidence in the Church and her ministers? and the engendering a disposition to consider her discipline defective, and her views erroneous, and perhaps religion itself altogether a “cunningly devised fable?” or, if it do not come to this extremity; coldness, indifference, and formality, will prevail in one place; enthusiasm and intolerance in another¹. This is a great evil; and it behoves us to consider well the means of obviating it.

In doing this, it appears to me to be above all things necessary, that we search for the truth at

¹ What clergyman who is in the habit of conversing with his parishioners on their spiritual condition, can be ignorant of the state of distraction and perplexity into which the minds of many of our villagers are thrown, by the various doctrines which they hear in the meeting houses which they are induced to enter, or read in the tracts industriously circulated amongst them? If the Church through want of unity adds to this sad evil, where is any sure footing to be found by the sincere and humble enquirer after truth? She should always be the grand rallying point, round which the wavering soldiers should gather; the cistern where pure water should always be found; the steady beacon-light to guide the wanderer to a place of safety. And these she cannot be, if discordant doctrines are proclaimed from her pulpits. How seriously should this be impressed on the minds of her ministers! What pains should they not take to be at unity among themselves!

the fountain head, for "out of the Holy Scriptures are you to instruct the people committed to your charge, "teaching them nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures¹." If you would be at unity among yourselves in respect to doctrine, you must not take a narrow, contracted, one-sided view of the words of inspiration, nor examine them through the medium of party-spirit; but with a sincere disposition (to be sought and obtained by prayer and supplication,) to discover and embrace the truth whatever may be the opinions of any particular section of the Church, of any private individual members. Men are naturally disposed to fall into the views of those with whom their feelings sympathise, and of whose piety, talent, and general worth, they entertain a high opinion; and there can be no doubt that in Religion as in politics, many persons think only as their party thinks, and speak and write as their party speaks and writes. But this is not the way either to arrive at the truth, or to establish unity among the Clergy; there should be but one party and one bond of union, the party of the Church of which they are ministers; a party devoted to

¹ Ordination Service.

the service of God, and bound together by the sacred obligation of their ordination vows "to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same¹." What you teach and inculcate directly from the pulpit, should always be in unison with what the Church indirectly teaches in the various collects and offices of her Book of Common Prayer. It is one, and that a chief object of a national liturgy, and a national Clergy to preserve unity of doctrine, as well as of form and government; and when the State shows a particular preference, or yields its especial protection to any one Church, it is on the understood condition, that the Clergy use without alteration, omission, or addition, the Liturgy of the Church so adopted; and that in their addresses to the people they inculcate the same truths which are embodied in that Liturgy, and preach the doctrines laid down in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion which they have subscribed and pledged themselves to observe².

The Church of England has, by rubrics and canons, directed her Clergy how to use the va-

¹ Ordination Service.

² The following observations on a subject frequently can-

rious offices of her Prayer-books ; and to these, while they remain unchanged, we are bound to

vassed of late, were left out in reading the Charge, for the sake of brevity :—“ And here I would make a few remarks on the question, whether the Clergy are at liberty to use extemporary or as it used formerly to be called, ‘conceived prayer’ before the sermon. ‘The public prayer,’ says Hooker¹, ‘of the people of God in Churches thoroughly settled, did never use to be voluntary dictates proceeding from any man’s extemporal wit ;’ and whoever will be at pains to understand the history and constitutions of our Church, must come I think to the conclusion, that privately conceived prayer cannot be used publicly in the pulpit without violating those laws, &c. This, I think, must be the conclusion at which any one will arrive, who will take the trouble to investigate the force and meaning of the Injunctions of Edward and Elizabeth ; and the origin and purpose of the 55th Canon. In fact the Lord’s prayer is the only *petitionary* form to be used before the sermon, which is acknowledged by the Church of England, though custom may in some degree have sanctioned the use of certain collects from the Liturgy ; but there is no sanction that I have been able to discover, either of good custom or authority for extemporary prayer. It is almost superfluous to observe, that what is commonly called the bidding prayer, prescribed in the 55th Canon is, in reality, not a prayer, but only an exhortation to prayer.”—See Sparrow’s Rationale. Sharp on the Rubrics, and 55th Canon. See also an Order of Convocation for regular Forms of Prayer before and after Sermon, in Gibson, p. 381.

If we are to judge from the abuse of unrestrained extempore prayer by some dissenting ministers, we shall conclude

¹ Eccles. Polity, b. v. § 25.

adhere: and it is, moreover, the duty of the Ordinary to maintain discipline, and to see that no deviation be made by subordinate Ministers from the prescribed rules,—thus far Church authority indubitably extends. And lest, in defiance of the authority of the Church, this admirable spiritual Liturgy should be altered according to the peculiar views and notions of individuals, parts left out by some, and words put in by others, the State steps in to the aid of the Church; and, by the power of the law, enforces the proper use of that which she has adopted as the best form of public worship. In this respect, and for this important purpose amongst others, the maintenance of Unity of Doctrine, as matter of necessary discipline, the civil is joined with the spiritual authority, and

that our Church has done wisely in interdicting the use of it in the public service. The following are the words of a person of considerable eminence among the congregational dissenters: —“The practice which is, I fear, by no means uncommon, of using a prayer as a medium of fortifying fanatical misrepresentations of the Gospel, and fostering a censorious and bitter temper among the devotees of such teaching, is little, if at all, less reprehensible than the practice of rendering it a vehicle of a low humour, ridiculous conceits, and vulgar tales; all conspire to bring into contempt the pure and sacred spirit of Christian devotion.”—*See Walford on the Manner of Praying.*

thus the alliance between Church and State is constituted. Unity of Doctrine the State considers as of great importance to the peace and good order of the nation ; and, as the wisdom of the Church decides that this is best secured by the universal use of one form of Divine worship, and by conformity to certain articles of religion, her ally enables her to enforce the rules and regulations which she has made, and to preserve a certain discipline in the various ranks of her officers. At different periods¹ since the Reformation, statutes have been made, called acts of uniformity, for this express purpose ; and whoever of his own accord, in the performance of public worship or administration of the Sacraments, alters the Liturgy or makes use of any other form, is guilty, both of a breach of Ecclesiastical discipline, and of the statute law of the realm².

¹ In the reigns of Edward VI., Elizabeth, and Charles II.

² I am aware that in the metropolis and other large and populous places, it has been customary to shorten some of the offices of the Church, on the ground that neither the strength of the officiating ministers would hold out if the rubrics and canons were to be strictly observed ; nor would there be time sufficient for the performance of the duties. Whether, under such circumstances, it would be well to give our spiritual Rulers a discretionary power to dispense, in some cases, with

With the same view the Clergy of the Church of England have been rendered independent of their congregations as to the provision for their support. The great advantage of an endowment for their maintenance consists in placing them above the temptation of being unfaithful to their Divine Master, or of wounding their own consciences by preaching what may be agreeable to the taste, rather than what is conducive to the spiritual health of their congregations ; and in protecting them in the enjoyment of their endowments, the State assumes that they adhere strictly to their public ministrations, to the Liturgy¹, and articles of the Church, which she

the strict observance of the rubrics and canons, is a question on which I do not enter, it has already been done by an abler hand : I merely expound the law as it stands, and state the obligation of the Clergy to observe it until it be altered.

¹ But it may be said that though the Thirty-nine Articles were drawn up for the express purpose of ensuring unity of doctrine in the Church, the Clergy do not all interpret them alike. This may be true ; and a great evil it is. But does it not show the vast importance of their understanding those Articles in their *primitive* as well as in their “ literal and grammatical sense,” in order to come to an agreement as to their force and meaning ? Their *primitive* sense, I need scarcely observe, is to be ascertained by placing ourselves in the situation of those who prepared them ; by a particular study of the

has taken under her care ; and whoever deviates from them breaks faith with the State which gives him a preference.

In order to preserve unity, the nature of the constitution, and of the discipline of the Church should be well understood and kept in mind. I would not insinuate that the Clergy are not well informed on this point ; but as there are other members of the Church here present, and office-bearers in it, who may, without offence, be presumed not to be so well acquainted with that Constitution, I would add here a few words on the subject.

It should, then, be remembered that the Church of England does not consist of a separate, headless, and disjointed number of independent congregations, in which every minister

history of the Reformation, and of the opinions of those “few divine men” who were principally concerned in drawing them up ; by considering the circumstances which gave rise to them, and by comparing them with the Liturgy and homilies, and the chief source from which their substance was taken². A large, comprehensive and unprejudiced view of the subject in this as in all other cases, is the best way of discovering the truth, and arriving at unanimity.

¹ Bp. Hind's expression.

² Confession of Augsburg.

may conduct the public devotions in any form he likes, or as his congregation may prefer ; but is an Episcopal Church, formed after the models of primitive antiquity : and has laid down by her own inherent¹ authority, derived from Christ and his Apostles, and with the consent of the Crown and Parliament of this realm, certain rules and regulations for the more effective discharge of its functions, the administration of which she entrusts to Bishops, and which no individual Presbyter is at liberty to alter or set aside at his own pleasure, but which every one who accepts office in that Church is bound to observe.

The power, which is invested in our Bishops for the due administration of the Government of the Church, is derived from two sources, the word² of God and the laws of the land ; and their right to exercise discipline on this two-fold foundation has been confirmed by various Acts of Parliament³ passed in different reigns. That branch of discipline which is administered in the Courts Christian, or, as they are more commonly called, Ecclesiastical Courts, and which has been denominated the *legal*, in contradistinction to the *spiritual*, authority of the Bishops, or the jurisdiction in *foro exteriori*, is derived from

¹ See Art. xx. ² Titus i. 13. ii. 15. 2 Tim. v. 1—3.

³ See the three Acts of Uniformity.

the Crown—such, for instance, are matrimonial and testamentary causes ¹. These are not strictly of a spiritual nature, but have been thought by Princes to be properly cognizable by spiritual authority ; and whenever the Bishop takes cognizance of these and such like matters, he does

¹ Before the Conquest, in order to prevent any collision between the ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction, the Bishop and the Earl sat in the same court. In ecclesiastical causes the Bishop sat as judge, while the Earl, as his coadjutor, gave effect to spiritual censures : in civil causes the Earl presided, and the Bishop, as his assistant, conferred solemnity on the infliction of temporal penalties ¹. But this joint jurisdiction, said to have been established by Alfred, was dissolved by the Norman conqueror, who ordained that no Bishop should submit to the judgment of any secular person a cause which related to the cure of souls, but that such cases should be brought before the Bishop of such places as he should appoint, and be there decided according to the canons and the episcopal law. This was the origin of that separate jurisdiction, by which the Church obtained so much power, down to the time of the Reformation ; when it was greatly curtailed, and the question determined by authority which could not be disputed, what portion of ecclesiastical power the Church received by commission from the Crown : and what it could justly claim as invested in it by its spiritual Head and Divine Founder.

¹ Carwithen's Ch. Hist. vol. i. and Short's Sketch of the Hist. of the Church of England, vol. i.

so, in this country, by the concession of the King enforced by the law and custom of the realm¹.

This exercise of discipline in *foro exteriori* is commonly administered by the Bishop, through the instrumentality of his Chancellor, Vicar-general, or Official, to whom he delegates, by commission, his *legal* authority : whilst he reserves to himself all spiritual and voluntary jurisdiction, he empowers his Chancellor to sit in his court, to hear all causes of a temporal nature, that is, all causes in which temporal rights are concerned². The superintendence of the Clergy, as to manners and functions, the detection and punishment of every irregularity in their conduct, belong immediately to the Bishop, whose province it is to visit the diocese, and oversee every thing connected with religion and its ministers. And though it were to be desired that his means of punishing gross delinquency were more simple and expeditious than is actually the case, yet it is a subject of great satisfaction to know that the instances in which a Bishop is called upon to interpose his authority

¹ See *Gibson's Code, Introduction.*

² Such as wills, rights of pews, &c. The Chancellor also grants licenses for marriages ; and appoints surrogates to assist him in this department of his duty.

for the correction of his Clergy are extremely rare.

And since from the extent of a diocese, and from his necessary attendance in the metropolis, and often it may be from age and infirmity, the Bishop cannot always oversee these matters in person, the Archdeacon, who in the Canon Law is called "the eye of the Bishop," assists him in exercising the superintendence belonging to his office. He fills the place of the ancient Chorpiscopus, and his duty is to inspect the general conduct of the Clergy; and to see that the parish churches, and all things belonging to them, are maintained in a proper state of repair and fitness for the services to be performed in them¹. And again, as the Archdeacon may be so circumstanced as not to be able to visit on every emergency, or to be so minute in his inquiries into every case that may require immediate attention; the Rural Dean², whom the Bishop appoints to inspect the glebes and glebe-houses, the church and church-yards, the vestments, the books, the communion plate, and all other things necessary for the becoming celebration of Divine

¹ Bingham's Antiquities, vol. i. Berens' Church Reform.

² For a history of Deans Rural, and their office, see Mr. Dansey's learned, elaborate, and elegant book, entitled "*Horæ Decanicæ Rurales*."

worship and the Holy Rites of the Church, supplies his place, and reports to the Bishop the condition in which he finds these things ; and gives such directions as the Ordinary authorizes him to do, and the state of the parishes in his deanery seem to call for. And if the Rural Dean's directions should not receive from the Churchwardens the attention due to them, the Bishop will then lay his commands on his Chancellor or Archdeacon to enforce them by the authority of their respective Courts.

But in making these observations on the constitution of the Church, I must not forget the main object of this address, which is to urge the great importance of unity. I have already spoken of unity of spirit, and unity of doctrine, and it remains that I say a few words on the necessity of unity of ACTION. The Staff (if I may so designate the various members of the government of the Church, of whom I have been just speaking,) when well directed, affords great facility for this species of unity.

The Church demands at this crisis more than ever union of both counsel and action among her children, and more especially among her ministers. It is of the greatest moment to the cause of peace and order, and to the instruction of the people in pure and sound principles of re-

ligion and morals as constituting the only sure foundation of that peace and order, as well as to their eternal salvation, that their spiritual pastors should be united as we have already described ; that neither the Infidel nor the Dissenter, Popish or Protestant, may have it in his power to say with truth or justice, that they are not “making full proof of their ministry,” that they are not making a proper or adequate return to the state, for the preference hitherto granted to them—that they are not faithfully, diligently, and successfully discharging the duties of their high and holy calling. Let each individual amongst us feel this, and act accordingly ; and if, from the unhallowed hands of a reckless and unprincipled race of agitating politicians, we cannot save the Ark of the Church, we shall have at least the consolation to reflect that it has not been by our remissness or want of union in her defence that she has been overpowered.

The various societies in more immediate connection with the Church afford also many opportunities and facilities, duly applied, for the exercise of that unity of action which is so important to her prosperity, and to the success of her endeavours to promote the instruction and improvement of all classes of the community ; and it

were well if the appointed times of meeting of the committees of these societies were more numerous and more regularly attended by the members than is the case in many places. It should not be considered sufficient to aid the objects of them with our purses only. Those of the Clergy and Laity who take the trouble to superintend the affairs of the different societies, are entitled to the *personal* support and countenance as well of laymen as of clergymen resident in their respective neighbourhoods; whilst the Church and the country owes them a large debt of gratitude. It is not necessary that I should further trespass on your time by recalling your attention and support to the two venerable societies, branches of which have long been established in this deanery, and which always have a claim to the interest of churchmen; I would rather in conclusion bring to your notice, the state of the CHURCH UNION SOCIETY¹, established

¹ The CHURCH UNION SOCIETY of the Diocese of Salisbury is intended to afford to superannuated or disabled curates the means of retiring from duties to which they are no longer equal; and to enable aged or infirm incumbents, and endowed lecturers of small incomes, to provide clerical assistants. It also affords assistance towards the building, purchasing, improving, or otherwise rendering habitable glebe houses, so as to facilitate the residence of the officiating ministers within

and munificently supported in this diocese by the late pious and learned Bishop Burgess, of whom it may be said with truth, that a man more devoted in heart to God, more zealous for his glory, and the diffusion of the Gospel of his Blessed Son, could scarcely be found. The love of God was the prevailing sentiment of his soul, and the moving spring of his actions; and next of kin to that, benevolence to man, and especially to those who were devoting themselves to their Master's work, and suffering for his sake: and in these principles and affections the Church Union Society had its origin. You are no doubt aware that a society has been instituted under the highest patronage, "for promoting the employment of additional curates in populous places," distinct from that society which is called "The Pastoral Aid Society." It was thought by some excellent persons that the Church Union Society of this diocese might be combined with this "Additional Curates Society," a branch of which will in all probability be established in this diocese, and thus be made more extensively useful: but after the fullest consideration on the part of the friends of both, it has been decided,

the precincts of their respective parishes. Superannuated parish clerks are also objects of its benevolence.

that the former should remain independent of, and unconnected with, the latter, but that its rules should be attended to, its constitution made more popular, and its resources applied in a manner more likely to render it more immediately and more extensively beneficial. New rules have accordingly been drawn up, and they seem such as will be generally approved by the subscribers, to whom copies will be in due time forwarded. I would also mention on this occasion another society in support of the Church, as affording a fresh opportunity of unity of action in her favour, I mean the "Diocesan Church Building Association," as yet very imperfectly organized in these deaneries, but which it is hoped will soon be in full and beneficial action. Its success must greatly depend upon the exertions of the Clergy in their respective deaneries, and their influence with their neighbours and parishioners, and such I conceive to be their zeal and good feeling towards it, that it is unnecessary for me to press it farther on your attention, than to urge the immediate formation of Decanal Committees in conjunction with the resident laity, to co-operate with the rest of the diocese in this important undertaking. We must consider that it is not merely the supply of the wants of this diocese which are the objects of this So-

ciety, though of course they form a principal object ; but the urgent necessities of many other parts of the kingdom, crying out to their fellow churchmen here to assist them with the means of worshipping their Creator and Saviour according to the rites and ordinances of the Church of England.

Keeping this in view, we must not I think wait any longer for the final decision, or rather, I ought to say, for the carrying into effect of the plan of the Ecclesiastical Commission, to separate the Deaneries of Malmesbury and Cricklade from the Diocese of Salisbury, but proceed immediately to organize committees and collect subscriptions.

But to particularize all the modes and ways in which unity of action may be sustained, is obviously impossible on such an occasion as this, let us but cultivate and cherish the principle, and there will never be found wanting an opportunity of calling it into life : and I now conclude in the beautiful and affecting words of the Psalmist, " Behold, how good and joyful it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity."

THE END.

6

APOSTOLICAL EPISCOPACY CONSIDERED:

IN A

C H A R G E

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF LONDON,

AT THE VISITATION, HELD MAY 13, 1837.

BY

JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF LONDON,

AND CHANCELLOR OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF EXETER.



PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY PRESENT.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

LONDON:

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1837.

TO
THE REVEREND THE
CLERGY OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF LONDON,
THIS
DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED TO THEM, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS DEDICATED,
BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT,
J. H. POTT.

A

CHARGE,

&c.

MY REV. BRETHREN,

WE are fallen upon times when many, who dissent from us and hold separate communions, have pressed their separation to a greater length than others did, who, after days of trouble and confusion, professed a wish for union, if it might be had upon their terms. There are many now by whom no terms are put forward, whose cry is that of unqualified hostility.

We have found indeed some welcome and no less generous exceptions on the part of others, who, though still dissenting from us, hold a different language. But from very many, the call is for an absolute surrender of the bond of discipline in our Church, as protected by the constitution of the realm, and maintained in our national establishment.

Under circumstances then of clamour and assault, it is time at least to defend our own cause against objections only rendered new by new exaggerations in the mouths of new opponents. I trust that this defence may be made without, for a moment, losing sight either of the good will of more generous adversaries, or of a true desire for union upon common terms, though not with concession or neglect of what can admit no compromise. Happily the point to which my views will be directed chiefly, and to which I shall call your notice, was not thrown out in times past, when terms of union were proposed, upon the rescue of the land from distraction and disorder, and upon the restoration of the government.

I shall not then forfeit my own claim to consistency, when I purpose to defend what is essential to the integrity of discipline amongst us, although cherishing, as I shall never cease to do, a cordial wish for union, together with that good will which must lead to it, where it can be had, and follow from it where it is obtained.

If I shall seem, then, to strengthen old impediments by not yielding what was never yet conceded, but belongs to the collective suffrage of the Christian Church, it is in order that some ground may be left for us in matters of that nature from Scripture and antiquity, upon which the foot may rest. Thus far, and no farther, might be said by

the Sovereign Lord of all things when he put limits to the restless tides of seas and floods which He only could control; and there are waves as blind as those of seas and floods, against which the mounds should be kept, and the limits carefully preserved.

I will add but one more preliminary observation. It is no new thing for men to prosecute their own opinions; but it is a very unfair and preposterous thing to attempt to force a change of any sort not only upon partial reasons and unproved assumptions, but against the public voice expressed in the laws and provisions of the country, and in opposition to the major part of the community. This was in fact the case in the past age to which I have alluded, when the arm of force prevailed to the subversion of the constituted government in Church and State. When things were restored to order and tranquillity, it soon appeared to what part the greater number were attached. As something, however, of that kind of violence which spurns all limits, never fails to make its efforts where reformation is desired and intended by more considerate men; and as in such cases, things are often urged far beyond all salutary measures of improvement, it becomes our duty, whatever may be wished and should be yielded for peace sake, to look well to the ground on which we stand. Though we cannot even for peace sake, say with

poor Mephibosheth concerning an unjust accuser, "yea, let him take all," yet far from disclaiming any just ground which can be laid for peace, I cherish a persuasion that an earnest wish for union in one flock and one pasture, does keep its place in our hearts, and is not cast out from the hearts of many who are still unhappily divided from us.

In regarding, then, the ground of union with relation to external discipline, my thoughts turn very naturally to the bond of Apostolical Episcopacy. To that ground the reformed Church in the Northern States of Europe adhered, and do so to this day, and they who took another course, lamented the necessity by which they were constrained, declaring with one voice, that it was their hearts' desire to have kept the same form of government had they been able, judging those to be most happy who, in the good work of reform where it was most needful, were joined by their prelates, as the Church of England was in her well-ordered reformation.

Well, then, may I take this for a ground of union and regard it as the nearest and most practicable step to good agreement, since it was owned, in fact, on both sides, when common terms seemed likely to procure compliance and consent.

Without attempting to traverse the wide field of controversy, for which this season of assembly furnishes no sufficient leisure, my aim will be to

touch some chief points with relation to this kind of discipline which have been defended evermore against assumptions which never could be proved. The changes once wrought in those respects in this land were the growth of a late age, and, as was before remarked, prevailed only when the arm of force prevailed.

The twin branches of civil and religious government, have one sanction in the will of God ; and it is no bad omen where an union upon common terms is still desired, that the main ground is in some particulars allowed on either part. Thus it is confessed very generally, that the powers of ordination and of jurisdiction by the keys left by Christ in his Church, are of Divine Institution. They who question this, must forget our Lord's words, " as my Father sent me, so send I you ;" and, " lo, I am with you always to the end of the world." That these powers must also be administered by some who in all times have received their commission for that end, is also acknowledged generally to be matter of Divine appointment. I shall only add here, before I come to the chief particulars which I have in view, that the subsistence of a national Church where the Christian faith is entertained in any land, can, we think, be plainly traced to the provisions made to that end by the Divine word and promise, as well as to inherent rights in sovereign powers. Certain

it is that the national form of planting churches gives the best security for stability in faith and worship. The churches thus united in one confession and one mode of ministration for the word and sacraments, and for the public ceremonies of religion, do thus prescribe one rule for all.

But in pursuing my design with reference to Apostolical Episcopacy, I shall remark first, that although the subject be of such importance, and such as once brought us nearest to the point of union in matters of external government after days of contest and disaster, yet was it left entangled with perplexities which have not vanished in the days which have succeeded. In order to get clear of some of these perplexities, and to confine them, at least, to their proper limits in this controversy, I shall observe next, that from the main particulars of which I have to treat, the pleas for separation which respected ceremonies, vestments, liturgies, and oaths, or declarations of engagement, stand apart, as do several other things by which the subject has been puzzled, and contention kept alive.

With respect to ceremonies and things of that nature, I must remind you that the foreign churches of the reformation gave also a decisive judgment in our favour on this head, and have left it upon record under their own hands.

Thus from the main particulars to which I

shall crave your attention, the question concerning the compass and extent of dioceses in the first age, likewise stands apart. It has been indeed very strangely made the last retreat of many, who though contesting other points with us, concurred however in referring Episcopacy to an apostolic origin, and offered once more to accept it, if we would permit them to restrain the boundaries of each diocese to a single flock.

As foreign to the main point I have in view, is the question whether the Bishop and the Presbyter differ as several orders, or as several degrees.

As little also to the purpose, is the strife raised upon the promiscuous use of titles and denominations in the first age, and in the language of the New Testament. The point which I have to establish was plain enough amidst all that interchange of names.

Nor more decisive of the main point, though caught at so eagerly, was the singular opinion of St. Jerome.

To each of these busy questions, I shall find occasion to advert as we pass on; when I trust it will appear that they do not touch the main particular which I have to defend. It is briefly this—that we have firm footing in the sacred Scriptures, and the pattern of the apostolic age, attested by the earliest writers of the Church, that the first grant of power to His Apostles by our blessed

Lord, and their conveyance and distribution of it in several measures to others in their own age, in virtue of their own commission—most distinctly shows, that there were always some who were invested with especial powers, to whom the Presbyters were subject, both before and after the titles once used interchangeably became fixed. There were always some to govern and ordain ; to reprove, correct, to set in order, to receive complaints against those below them of what rank soever. The proofs of this in the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles of St. Paul, and the word addressed to the angels of the Churches at a later day, are so well known and have been so successfully maintained, that they need no recital at this time ; they show assuredly that from the first, those powers were restrained to some superiors, and were exercised in the Apostles' days, either by themselves or by others to whom they were entrusted. The true question is, whether all those who were at first called by common ministerial names, as the Apostles themselves were, ever exercised those powers in common, and had not some acts appropriated to them according to their several commissions. If the latter mode obtained in the Apostolical Church, without doubt it should do so now, for we cannot have a better pattern. In vain has this point been entangled with the interchange of names before alluded to, as at first

prevailing, although the powers themselves were evermore distinct. That ground of dispute may well, as I have said, be set aside, where the proof is to be made that in no case, singly or conjointly, did the Presbyters, now properly so called, ever exercise those powers which belonged to the Apostles, and to those to whom they conveyed a portion of their own authority. Of that number of Apostolical persons we have divers names recorded in the sacred page of Scripture. The question then is, yet again, whether the power of ordination with other privileges of Episcopacy, were conveyed to chosen men even in the days of the Apostles, or were left indifferently to the Presbyters. And what can so well decide this, as the known fact recorded in the sacred Scriptures, to which all antiquity has borne so plain a testimony.

Having then stated the main particular which I have in view, which requires less proof, because it has been so often and so well established, I may observe now with reference to another of the questions touched before, that the point debated whether the difference between Bishop and Presbyter be that of order or degree, although it make nothing to the main circumstance with which I am concerned, yet does it claim a special notice at our hands, since some of our communion appear to have countenanced the distinction of degree, but

with no design, assuredly, to impeach the honor of Episcopacy. We know the evil aspect which the papal See, since the claim for one to be an universal Bishop was set up, has borne upon episcopal prerogatives ; but none of our communion will be suspected of leaning to those attempts against the rightful independence of Episcopal authority.

We must, however, look for the rise of that question concerning order or degree, to the doctrines of the schools, and to those opinions which made orders to be another Sacrament ; and then regarding also the right of consecrating the Holy Eucharist as the highest privilege and exercise of sacerdotal power, the distinction of degree came in very naturally ; for as much as the sacramental character, and the consecrating power as it regards the Eucharist, are common to the Bishop and the Presbyter. But the inference that the power of ordaining would be, therefore, valid in the Presbyterial hand, because he had the character of orders and the power to consecrate the Eucharist, did not follow. The schoolmen themselves, never urged that consequence, though they might adapt their language to their own conceits, and were indeed much followed by many of the first reformers, and gave the tone to some of their opinions. But the language of our chief reformers in this land, is best seen in their public acts.

“The book of Common Prayer, and for ordaining and consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,” speaks for itself—“It is evident,” says the preface to that formulary, “unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” In the answers printed by our historian Strype, from the Cotton manuscript, Cranmer, with two others in reply to the tenth query, says “Christ made Apostles first, which were of his own making—after that the Apostles made both Bishops and Priests, the names whereof in Scripture be confounded.” In a word, whatever becomes of the question (if it can be made a question) concerning the terms used, neither the schoolmen nor the reformers ever questioned the distinction of power. The power of ordination and the privileges of episcopal authority stand, as we have seen, on other grounds of provision made to that effect; and the proof of any actual exercise of such powers by Presbyters has been sought in vain. It is past all hope that it ever will be found. Where could the reformers seek it? Not in the valleys of Piedmont, nor among the primitive Waldenses; they from the first had ever had episcopacy; and the reformed Bohemians, in their hour of need, prudently and wisely sought their

aid, and derived the succession of their orders from them.

Must we turn then to St. Jerome in this case? His expostulation with his aspiring Deacons, goes far indeed in gratuitous assertion; and yet by his own confession, it falls greatly short of that for which it is alleged. He puts in a plain exception in favour of the Bishop's power, which quite spoils the triumph which is raised on his assertion, "*Quid facit Episcopus exceptâ ordinatione, quod Presbyter non faciat,*"—are words which establish the very truth to which his suffrage is opposed. The Scholiast on this place refers to St. Jerome's own words elsewhere, in order to supply this further testimony, "*quod hic omisit, Hieronymus in dialogo contra Luciferianos posuit; scilicet quod Episcopus etiam confirmet.*"

Nor is this all—for in the conclusion of the same epistle, St. Jerome distinctly compares the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Christian Church, to Aaron, the inferior Priests, and Levites, of the legal dispensation. His words are, "*ut sciamus traditiones Apostolicas sumptas de Veteri Testamento, quod Aaron, et filii ejus, atque Levitæ, in Templo fuerunt, hoc sibi Episcopi et Presbyteri et Diaconi vindicent in Ecclesiâ.*"

He says as plainly on Gal. i. 9. "*procedente*

tempore, et alii ab his quos Dominus elegerat, ordinati sunt Apostoli." Nay, in the very passage so much urged he says no more than this—that it was agreed, for the sake of avoiding schism, to set some above the rest,—“quod autem postea unus electus est qui cæteris præponeretur, in schismatis remedium factum est; ne unusquisque ad se trahens, Christi ecclesiam rumperet.” Where although he ventures, without a trace of sacred history for his support, to put this agreement as an after thought, not first intended by the Apostles, which is strange enough, and no very decent supposition; yet he acknowledges that this was done by the Apostles, they being still alive; and, as he declares elsewhere, had it been otherwise there might have been as many schisms as Presbyters. Nor does he hesitate in another place to say, without reserve, “Apostolorum locum tenent episcopi;” and again—“Episcopi stant in loco Pauli, et gradum Petri tenent.”

Take these things together, and our cause can suffer little by St. Jerome. And if writers be regarded, older than he by centuries, whose writings have been vindicated by our own divines against all exceptions, the case will be clear enough.

What St. Jerome says concerning the peculiar customs which he states to have obtained in the

Church of Alexandria, will be found to serve as little for the end of proving parity of powers. A participation in some respects, is not denied. The words are “*nam et Alexandriae, a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heracleam et Dionysium Episcopos, Presbyteri semper unum ex se electum, in excelsiori gradu collocatum, Episcopum nominarunt.*” Thus he establishes a succession of Bishops at Alexandria, with St. Mark at their head,—and although he speaks of a custom in that Church, to choose one from among the Presbyters to succeed upon a vacancy, yet he does not tell us how or by whom they were ordained or consecrated. Surely it is more easy and more warrantable from known usage, for us to suppose that the neighbouring Bishops were called in for that purpose, than for our opponents to conclude that the Presbyters did this of themselves, which would flatly contradict St. Jerome in what he says, in his excepted case of ordination. The word then is “*nominarunt,*” and the comment of the Scholiast on this place is remarkable—“*Dum autem ait unum è cæteris assumi, qui postea sit Episcopus, electionem talem respicit qualis in Germaniâ fieri ab ecclesiarum capitulis solet.*”

We may remark here again that if it be the promiscuous use of names, which is turned against us in this controversy, St. Jerome’s testimony is

decisive for the distinction of powers, notwithstanding the community of names. He guards his first position with a direct exception.

Where the same latitude of names in other cases forms an objection in the mouths of our opponents, and it is urged, that in writing to the Philippians St. Paul mentions only Bishops and Deacons, which may be construed, if you think fit, only Presbyters and Deacons ; our answer is at hand : be it so ; only remember that when St. Paul wrote that letter, Epaphroditus was with him, and is called by him in plain terms your Apostle ; the Apostle of those to whom he wrote, and among whom he stands on record as their Bishop. Of him it is, that Hilary, the Deacon, a writer of the same age with St. Jerome, says so plainly on the same place, “ erat enim (Epaphroditus,) eorum Apostolus, ab Apostolo factus.”

And when the same kind of objection has been fastened on the same unsettled use of ministerial designations, and the cavil is with reference to the charge given to the Elders of Ephesus,—it is there assumed, (but not granted by many learned men, with St. Chrysostom and others of great name at their head,) that there were no other than Presbyters in that number,—but if it were so, it would determine nothing with relation to the several powers of the Bishop and the

Presbyter ; it would rather favour that distinction of powers for which we contend ; and for this reason, that there is not a word in that charge respecting the peculiar function of the Bishop ; such as the laying on of hands, or exercising jurisdiction, all which particulars do occur wherever persons of that station are addressed. It would be something to the purpose, if the Presbyters of Ephesus, or any other Presbyters, in any case had received admonitions of that nature. In a word, wherever any perfect Church was formed, the superior and inferior orders are found, though in some cases it might happen that for a while, the Apostles being yet alive, there might in some places often visited by them, be no more than Presbyters and Deacons, till that want was supplied.

Again, that there were some persons, in superior stations, besides the twelve, if that required more proof, is evident enough from St. Paul's expression where he claims to have been made an Apostle, "not of men, nor by man." There must, then, have been persons who were made Apostles by men, by those, for instance, who did not receive their appointment from Christ himself, as the twelve did, and St. Paul did also. There must have been some persons, so ordained of men, or the ground of the comparison is lost at once. There were those then undeniably, who received

Apostolical powers from the Apostles, or from apostolical men, notwithstanding the peculiar privileges of our Lord's first witnesses. And as such power did not belong to Timothy and Titus only, but to others, who are also named in Scripture, so neither can the authority of those two be first merged in the title of Evangelist,—and then made to have been but a temporary thing. As this forms another ground of cavil, we may observe, that the word Evangelist occurs but three times in the page of Scripture ; once as applied to Philip, of whom we know that he preached the Gospel and baptized ; but that he wanted the superior powers, as appears most plainly from the course which followed. The other instances occur where Timothy is exhorted to do the work of an Evangelist—but that he was qualified to do more than Philip did, is also plain. The third mention is where the office itself is enumerated with other offices of which some were to cease, and have ceased ; but the powers and functions of Episcopacy stand upon perpetual grounds, and are founded on perpetual needs.

It is manifest that a disparity of orders was intended from the first, and by our Lord's appointment, by the pattern of the twelve and the seventy ; and that this did not depend upon peculiar gifts for special purposes is plain also, for the twelve and the seventy had these in common,

but the distinction still remained. Apply this to the case of Timothy and Titus, with those over whom they were set, and you will see how weak and desperate the argument is which would make the power to cease when the special gifts might be no more required, and that, therefore, their whole appointment was but temporary.

We may here add, what the sense of the fourth General Council was, when one of its canons made it sacrilege to reduce a Bishop to the rank of Presbyter.

Another cavil from equivocal expressions, before the titles became fixed, is raised upon the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery in the case of Timothy. But whatever be the meaning of the word Presbytery in that place, it cannot possibly set aside St. Paul's plain testimony, that Timothy received his ordination and commission by the laying on of his hand. If the Presbyters who might be present on that occasion, gave that mark of their concurrence, it is no more than what is done at this day in our Church, without the least pretence to any claim of parity of power; but to this interpretation, by which the Presbyters are brought in, many learned persons have preferred the construction which the word Presbytery will well bear, and does signify in other places, the sacred office itself, which undoubtedly belonged to Paul.

What was said by the learned Dr. Field in a former age, may serve now to close this head of discourse. "In ancient times," says this much valued writer, "Bishops were Pastors of the Dioceses solely; Presbyters their assistants and associates: but as the Apostles with that almost immense power which they had, were made Bishops of the world, yet being men confined to bodies, they were forced to use deputies and the help of others, even in their own charge, and whilst they lived—and certainly the Church was better governed by that subordination than if every one who had apostolical integrity had assumed apostolical authority (that is more generally and in other places). So it was, then, that those Bishops who had great dioceses committed to them by the Apostles, had also many inferior officers; but such were then their places of which they were made overseers, and they had not authority of jurisdiction over others." He does not mean that both Bishop and Presbyter have not a general power not limited to place; and with respect to Bishops not measured by the See assigned to them, whether it were large or small. And this brings me to touch once more upon the last retreat which some, in modern times, have chosen in these contests. A few remarks may be added, therefore, concerning the limits of Diocesan Episcopacy. That dispute, so eagerly maintained by Baxter in all his controversies on

this subject, can determine nothing where the several powers of divers persons form the question ; for thus they who contend so for the limit of the first Bishops to one flock, admit that they had Presbyters under them who were subject to them. The model proposed in a day of difficulty by Archbishop Ussher, and to which some leading men, though dissenting from us, professed to be ready to subscribe, was but for contracted dioceses, to be reduced to forty or fifty parishes ; and for a greater weight in council to be given to the Presbyters.

Now where dioceses prove too large for convenience, there has been no disinclination in past times or present in our Church, for making a reduction by creating new Sees. We have instances of this kind in this realm at divers periods, and some but recent in our own day. But this makes nothing for the right of separating from an Episcopal Church, and for assuming an ordaining power by Presbyters only because the churches first planted were not so large as now they are. We need not, therefore, go over the ground of controversy concerning the real boundaries of early dioceses. That task has been well performed¹, and strange it is that the whole stress of the controversy concerning Episcopacy should

¹ The very able work of Dr. Maurice did this effectually.

ever have been run into this question, as it has been.

In early times the well known language of One Altar for one city or one diocese, might be more completely proper when distant places were visited from one centre, and the word and sacraments administered by those who went out from the chief place of residence for the Bishop and for his associated Presbyters. In St. Cyprian's time there were reckoned forty-six Presbyters in Rome under their Bishop. But when congregations multiplied and were placed under the care of their appointed rectors, as Archbishop Ussher calls them, still remaining subject to the Bishop, it could not thereby follow that such congregations would want what was requisite to Church discipline only because they had not all power in themselves, and never had received it. If they had possessed such power as independent pastors, and were chosen too, as some would still require, by the people solely, you might have had ten such Bishops or twenty in one city ; and then farewell to Episcopacy and adieu to Presbyterian government. In a word, it cannot destroy the nature of a particular visible Church, that many of them appertain to one government provincial or diocesan. That such subjection does work that destruction, has been held by one branch of those who separated from us as well as from the chief leaders of the separa-

tion, but they could never prove that point. They were baffled, if not silenced, by those from whom they had wrested (once more by the arm of force) that first influence which had been obtained when Episcopacy was put down.

They who would press the point of one Bishop for one flock, and that flock no larger than might meet together under one roof, must make it credible, if they can, that in such churches as that of Ephesus, where St. Paul so long presided, and which he committed, as is allowed, to the care of divers Presbyters under one superior, had no more than one congregation for its bounds. But if it be credible, it is nothing to the main point.

When it was once asked if it could be believed, that the five thousand Christians at one time in Jerusalem made but one stated congregation, the answer given by one of Bishop Stillingfleet's opponents was, that some of the parishes in London had as many, and but one church. Happily the church then named in proof of this, that of St. Andrew, Holborn, has now several district churches, yet with no dissolution of the bond of unity and discipline.

I had nearly overlooked the dubious and obscure relation of some Scottish writers of a late age, concerning the discipline which for some uncertain time or period obtained in Scotland, if their construction may be put upon a passage in a writer

of the fourteenth century, the author of the *Scoti-Chronicon*, “in whose history,” says one of his biographers¹, “there are some traditions and many legendary tales too gross for belief.” He was followed by Hector Boethus, who, though master of a better style, was scarcely less remarkable for his credulity².

To whom may be added Johannes, Major and Buchanan. On these authorities it is said, “that before the coming of Palladius, the Scots had for their teachers in the faith, and ministers of the sacraments, Presbyters only or monks, following the rites of the primitive Church.” We might content ourselves with what a good writer³ has remarked concerning the monks of Iona, that “their story labours under such incongruities, that no judicious writer would choose to lay any weight upon it.”

We may however just observe, that such was the state of Scotland at some periods of bitter persecution, as in that of Maximus, that there might be neither Bishops, Presbyters, nor monks remaining in the land. It might well be so, if we believe those who tell us that the Scots all fled in various directions; many to the northern states, where

¹ Biographical Dictionary.

² See Bishop Nurlson's *Historical Library* to that effect.

³ Skinner's *Ecclesiastical History of Scotland*.

at least they would be sure to find Episcopacy, for they had never been without it. We may observe, that it was a strange conceit to take monks, the acknowledged growth of a late age, for the pattern of a primitive ministry; and we may take notice also of the misconstruction of the passage, which is so managed in the reading as if the Scots having “ Presbyters or monks only for their teachers in the faith and ministers of the word and sacraments, did” *in that respect* “ follow the rites of the primitive Church:” a meaning which the passage will not bear. The words are these: “ Ann. Dom. ccccxxx. Papa Cœlestinus primum Episcopum in Scotia misit Sanctum Palladium, de quo Scotis convenit, quod suam, id est, Scotorum gentem, longe quamvis in Christum ante credentem, fidem orthodoxam verbo sollicitè perdocuit, et exemplo festa simul et memorias ecclesiasticas diligenter celebrare. Ante cujus adventum habebant Scoti fidei doctores, ac sacramentorum ministratores, presbyteros solummodo vel monachos, ritum sequentes Ecclesiæ primitivæ.”—*Johannis de Fordun Scotichronicon*, vol. ii. p. 184. Edit. Hearnii.

It is easy to see that some such word as *thereby*, must be thrust into the sentence to make it bear their meaning. Nor will it serve the purpose any better that in support of Fordun’s testimony, Prosper, a writer of more credit, is brought in to say that Pal-

ladius was their first Bishop. The first he might be after days of destitution, before which they had a succession of Bishops, of whom Archbishop Spotswood gives such plain and distinct accounts¹. The first Bishop Palladius might be after days of exile and return : and that is all that can be fairly made of his testimony.

There is nothing then to show in all these writers, how the Scottish Presbyters originally got their ordination, or that they had it from themselves.

If any one record could be produced of such ordinations, it might indeed exhibit a strange exception to the plainest testimonies from the first age downwards.

Nor in making this challenge do we require more than we can bring in our own behalf ; for we can show not only the succession of the Bishops to which the earliest writers pointed, but that in every case recorded of ordinations attempted by Presbyters alone, the censures of the Church, and the cassation of such orders followed. The well-known instance of Colluthus and Ischyrras speaks a volume on this subject : and who will not prefer plain facts and historic evidence, in all cases, to schemes and theories, to which any testimony, not too explicit to admit such maunagement, may be twisted.

¹ See the narrative in the Appendix.

And now, my Reverend Brethren, I cannot take my leave of you without some word of apology and some further application of what has been said.

My apology for discussions such as I have here pursued, must be borrowed from my earnest desire to use such opportunities for furnishing at least the best fruits of my own studies and reflections, snatched from many pressing avocations. And surely the application of what has been said will not be wanting, since the wish for union, the cordial wish which good men have ever entertained, may I trust have found some encouragement from what I have suggested. Thus I have pointed to that ground of agreement to which so many in this country in a past age had in part assented.

I cannot number you, my Reverend Brethren, among those who regard even such aspirations as the looking after things impracticable, hopeless, visionary, and such as may be classed with the long-sought stone which was to change all metals of what quality soever into sterling gold. I have better thoughts of you: and surely the bare expression of such wishes and desires will tend always to abate the growth of strife, indifference, and ill-will—three pests, than which none can be worse in all the catalogue of mischiefs which sin hath bred—none worse in all the host of evil spirits.

If any application may be wanting with reference to the Clergy of our day, of which you form so prominent a number, it will not be, I trust, a word of flattery put forward in the room of admonitory exhortations, when I am induced to say—happy is it for the land where the voice of public approbation for its pastors extends from one end of the kingdom to the other. If I can say this safely to those whom I now address, without indulging too much to my own inclination (it may be) to join in an approving suffrage, yet I can truly say that I hear that suffrage from my own lips with a thoughtful mind and fearful spirit, and on my own part with little exultation.

A word more may be permitted me, with relation to the common wish which we should entertain for that unity of spirit, the spirit of sincere good will and candid dispositions, which will go far to form the very bond of peace. Allow me, then, my Reverend Brethren, to advert for a moment to the public testimonies lately given by an integral and noble branch of the British empire, which with so much condescending kindness was communicated to us by one in whose breast it could not fail to find a correspondent sentiment of candour and unfeigned good will. That public testimony, communicated to us by the Primate of our Church, and so seasonably rendered by the

Scottish Synod, is well calculated to add strength and vigour to the common ties by which the main stems of the kingdom stand united.

If it be a word of counsel that might well become me in this place, it shall be this—that the care to cherish evermore a true attachment to those who are set over us, will prove one sure bond of mutual duty and of joint co-operation in every good endeavour to be made by us for the public benefit.

If I have said somewhat of that larger share in council for the Presbyter, which was coupled with Archbishop Ussher's reduced scale of dioceses; that too has not been out of mind or without thought in our day, where improvements have been suggested or contemplated.

The full form of Synodical Assembly subsists among us, and nothing hinders that the *first* and *final* sanction from the highest branches of the legislature may be put forth where it is found requisite.

A welcome thing, I may here remark, it is to see the prelates who are brought in Parliament to take their part in the councils of the realm, joining themselves to every Board which meets for the management of our national institutions, which have wrought so much good far and wide, and to which other well-concerted plans, of like kind, have so recently been added. Nor is this

intercourse confined to such occasions, or limited to any time ; it is always open to resort—none can find the want of ready access in this diocese, for episcopal advice and counsel, and for every aid which a prompt and ever vigilant attention from the chief pastor of it, can supply.

Nor do the Cathedral Chapters of the land want the character and living image of a council near at hand in every diocese.

If a word of cautionary exhortation could now be thought further needful, it may be borrowed from what should be the sense of human imperfections with respect to men and governments ; a feeling which should bespeak much candour, and no less discretion, when men give their counsel and furnish their objections to the public. It would be well to consider at all times heedfully what the public ear is, and to how many chambers by those avenues the sound descends. If the suggestions of an eager spirit shall be marked with petulance, or accompanied with any tone of disrespect or angry feeling, such strictures will be caught up greedily where the worst use may be made of them ; and will be added to the common stock of bitter and unfruitful cavils, serving only to augment the growth of envy and to swell the murmurs of discontent.

But I will detain you, my Reverend Brethren, no longer. If the tide of time, in all ways, runs

hard against me, it shall be my stay, that having sought to strengthen bonds of union among ourselves, and to enlarge them, if we could, to others, I feel assured that I shall have your full concurrence in that endeavour, and in every good design.

APPENDIX.

ARCHBISHOP SPOTSWOOD gives a very distinct account of what is deserving of regard respecting the planting of Christianity in Scotland. He sets aside the claims of Baronius made in favour of Pope Victor and the Roman see; and for a sufficient reason, that when the dispute was raised by the Romish emissaries concerning the time of keeping Easter, the Scots refused to relinquish their ancient usage.

“ If our conversion,” saith Spotswood, “ had been wrought by Pope Victor, how came it that our Church was not fashioned to the Roman in outward rites, especially in the observance of Easter, whereof Victor was so zealous as to excommunicate all the churches of the East for their want of conformity to the Roman in that point?” He adds, “ I verily think that under Domitian’s persecution, when the Apostle St. John was relegated to Pathmos, some of his disciples have taken their refuge hither, and been the first preachers of the Gospel in this kingdom; and this I am induced the rather to believe, because in the hot contention moved about Easter, some two hundred years after, I find our Church did still retain the custom of the oriental, and maintain their practice by the authority

of St. John, from whom they pleaded to have received the faith."

He goes on to state what King Donald did in behalf of religion, and his endeavours to root out the druids, adding, that "after his death religion for many years was little or nothing promoted."

He goes on to the persecution raised by Dioclesian, "which brought many Christians from South Brittain into Scotland, who were kindly received here by Cratilinth, and had the Isle of Man given them for their remaining, and revenues sufficient assigned for their maintenance. In this isle King Cratilinth erected a stately church to the honour of our Saviour, which he adorned with all necessary ornaments, and called Sodorense fanum, that is, the temple of our Saviour. Hence it is that the Bishops of the isles are styled Sodorenses Episcopi; for so long as that isle remained in the possession of the Scots, the Bishops of the isles made that church their cathedral. After their dispossession, the island of Iona, commonly called Hecombekil, hath been the seat of the Bishops, and continueth so to this day."

"In this isle Amphibolus sate first Bishop; a Brittain born, and a man of excellent piety; he lived long, preaching carefully the doctrine of Christ, both among the Scots and the Picts; and after many labours taken for promoting Christian religion, died peaceably in the same isle."

He then considers the origin of the name of Culdees given to the priests, according to Hector Boethius, which brings him to the testimony of the same Boethius, "who," saith he, "out of antient annals reports, that these priests were wont, for their better government, to elect some one of their number, by common suffrage, to be chief and principal among them, without whose knowledge and consent

nothing was done in any matter of importance: and that the person so elected was called *Scotorum Episcopus*, a Scots Bishop or a Bishop of Scotland. Neither had our Bishops any other rule before the days of Malcolm, who first divided the country into dioceses; appointing to every Bishop the limits within which they would exercise their jurisdiction. After that time, they were styled either by the countries where they had the oversight, or by the city where they kept their residence."

He returns then to Cratlinth, "in whose reign," saith he, "the Christian religion prospered exceedingly," and his kinsman and successor kept, as he observes, the same course.

He then comes to the persecution under Maximus, a Spaniard, but of Roman education, "who presuming to bring the whole isle under his power, did practise secretly with the Picts for rooting out the Scots." The consequence of which was a battle, in which "the king and the most part of his nobility were slain."—"This defeat," says he, "was followed by a rigorous edict, which was so precisely executed, as neither man nor woman, young nor old, were permitted to stay; nay, not a churchman (though all of that profession were of good esteem among the Picts at the time); thus all the Scots went into exile, betaking themselves, some into Ireland, others into the countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; only some few churchmen, after they had long wandered from place to place, got privately into Iona, one of the west isles; where, living in a poor condition, they laid the foundation of a monastery." He adds, "it is uncertain how long they continued in exile; Boethius thinks forty-two years; returning in the year 422. Herford, king of the Picts, received them kindly, gave them his own palace with certain lands ad-

joining; erecting a church on the site of the ruined cathedral, called to this day the church of St. Rewle."

The return of the Scots under King Fergus is then related, and the reparation of the ruined churches with various fortunes, till the succession of his son and the coming of the Saxons in 450. He speaks too of the fame of Niniun, who had been educated under Martin, Bishop of Tours, his great uncle. "He built a church of white stone, and called the same by the name of St. Martin;" adding, that "among the Bishops of Galloway he is reckoned the first; and for the church, which he built of white stone, the Bishops of the isle have been called, and to this day are called *Episcopi Candidæ Casæ*."

It was in the time of King Eugenius, that Palladius came into Scotland after the coming of the Saxons: he came to resist the Pelagian heresy.

"Buchanan," saith the Archbishop, "is of opinion that before his coming there was no Bishop in this church; *nam*," saith he, "*ad id usque tempus, Ecclesiæ absque Episcopis per monachos regebantur; minore cum fastu et externâ pompâ, sed majore simplicitate et sanctimoniâ*." "What warrant," saith Spotswood, "he had for this I know not, except he did build upon that which Johannes Major saith, speaking of the same Palladius, *per sacerdotes et monachos sine Episcopis Scoti in fide erudiebantur*; but," saith the Archbishop, "from the instruction of Scots in the faith, to conclude, that the Church, after it was gathered, had no other form of government, will not stand with any reason; for, be it as they speak, that by the travels of some pious monks, the Scots were first converted unto Christ, it cannot be said that the Church was ruled by monks; seeing that long after these times, it was not permitted to the monks to meddle with matters of the Church, nor were

they reckoned among the clergy ; and as to the pride and pomp which he taxeth, in Bishops of later times it might be truly spoken, but after Palladius coming, for the space of six hundred years there was no excess to be noted in them."

This plain and simple account from one of known integrity and probity as a prelate and historian, will serve sufficiently to answer the assertions of Johan. Fordun, and others who have followed him.

In addition to what has been said of the Church of Scotland, it may not be unacceptable to make a reference to a little volume now very scarce, published in the year 1702, upon a visit to that country, and containing, as its title signifies, "*A short account of Scotland, being a description of the nature of that kingdom, and what the constitution of it is in Church and State,*" from the Reformation to that time. It is not for the purpose of invidious comparison that this reference is made, but it may serve to show what the character of episcopal government was considered to be from the sense entertained of it in successive changes.

"The Church of Scotland," says this author, "since the Reformation has suffered many convulsions and changes in its government, some so dangerous that they hazarded its very being. It will not, therefore, be unnecessary to give a short history of the alterations it had within the compass of 140 years; the rather, because on the late discharge of Episcopacy, it was warmly debated in Parliament what form of Church government they should pitch upon to succeed it; in handling of which question they were forced to refer to the prior forms in the days of their fathers, and which you have in the following lines:

"The Reformation of the Church of Scotland took effect

in the year 1560, under the conduct of Mr. Knox, and as they were then called the Lords of the Congregation. From which time the Church was managed by superintendants; the Latin of Bishops, and proper translation of ἐπίσκοπος signifying an overseer, and by usage of speech a Bishop. These superintendants presided in all their assemblies; had presentations directed to them, ordained ministers, and ordered all ecclesiastical affairs, and with the advice of their Presbyters in their respective meetings and synods. So that indeed it was no other than a moderate Episcopacy, though they altered the name for the great aversion they had to the popish prelates, who had a little before carried it high over them." He then describes the form and order of electing their superintendants.

"About this time," continues the author, "was prescribed a directory brought from Geneva, but with no peremptory injunction; but *rather*, say they, to *show the way to the ignorant than to prescribe order to the learned*.

"In the year 1571, the parliament sitting and a general assembly summoned to Stirling, the restitution or resettlement of Archbishops and Bishops was proposed: not that the government by superintendants was uneasy to the people, but the governors themselves declining in age, began to consider that seeing they served in this employment at their own charges, it would be a difficult work to find worthy men to succeed them in it; nobody being fond of an office where there was not a competency to bear up the grandeur of it. Hereupon at their motion a commission was directed to the superintendants of Lothian, Angus, and Fife, to consider this matter, and it was at last agreed to restore the hierarchy of Archbishops and Bishops, and to let them be chosen by their Deans and Chapters. This proposal was ratified at Perth the follow-

ing summer, 1572, and had the concurrence of Church and State at that time assembled.

“ But this government lasted only a few years, though it laid no greater burden on the people than what the superintendants did before. But Mr. Andrew Melvil coming from Geneva, and after the manner of the world, magnifying what he saw abroad, he represented the Church administration of that city with so much advantage, that he prevailed on ministers and people at length to accept it: and so in the year 1580, at an assembly at Dundee, they condemned Episcopacy, not only as an inconvenient government, but as in itself unlawful, and contrary to the word of God: so that the Bishops were ejected for some little time till the minority of king James was over; but he being of age and coming to rule himself, espoused their interest with so much vigor and success, that some dissenting ministers were forced to fly the kingdom for opposing him too much. But they returning back with a considerable force, joined to the friends they had at home, brought the poor prince to very hard terms, obliged him to a peace in prejudice of Episcopacy, and opened a way to the Presbyterian government which was settled by act of parliament, and Episcopacy abolished A. D. 1592.

“ This last government consisted of divers classes, containing each fifteen or twenty ministers, more or less, according to the distance of parishes or conveniency of situation; and these they called Presbyteries. They met where and when, and as often as they pleased. They had all presentations brought to them, which they accepted or refused as the presentee stood in their opinions. They ordained ministers, examined scandals, punished offenders; and in a word all church business passed through their hands, which they dispatched by plurality of voices, every

minister having in that an equal power, and no one preferred before his brethren, save that for order sake every half year they chose a moderator, who for that time was president, and had the charge of what was done at their meetings; and that they might preserve as good an understanding between all the presbyteries as was between the ministers of each in particular, it was resolved in a general assembly that a synod of seven or eight Presbyteries should be called twice in the year, and sit a week or two to clear some important doubts which single Presbyteries would not venture to do, and withal to make such acts as might edify the Church, which they entrusted the moderator with to put in execution; an office they frequently changed (as in the Presbyteries) till settled and made constant by a national synod in 1606. This is the notion of the Presbyterian government so called, and lasted to the year 1610.

“ At that time a national synod recalled Episcopacy, afterwards confirmed by parliament in 1612. Then full power was given to the Bishops for ordination and Church rule, assisted by a few Presbyters, but such as themselves were pleased to call, and were accountable only to the King’s supremacy for mal-administration. This form was called full Episcopacy, and continued till the year 1638, when the Prelates were again thrust out, and proper Presbytery revived, but were restored after the great restoration of the King and kingdom, and kept their chairs till the late revolution, when they and the Clergy were ejected once more and handled in an unchristian and inhuman manner.

“ I must not,” saith he, “ altogether omit one scheme of government among them known by the emphasis of ‘ Forty-nine,’ because in the year 1649 settled by act of

parliament, and may for distinction sake have the name of rigid Presbytery; thereby all presentations were taken from the Laity, who had no interest left in them, unless made an Elder, or member of their parochial meetings or Kirk Sessions, consisting of such parishioners as they found well affected to that manner of government, with the minister of the place, who was Moderator in all their debates, and if the Minister died, or was removed, this Eldership met immediately to choose another, calling some neighbouring Minister (one of the same Presbytery) to sit as Moderator till the election was over, which they determined as in our vestries by the major number of votes, without any regard had to the rightful patron, who as patron sat unconcerned all the while, and had no influence in the election. But after some time this way of choice met ill reception, because divers of their Ministry having had disappointments, perhaps by this plurality of voices, separated from their brethren, and protesting against the decisions of the parish judicatories, said *suffragia non sunt numeranda sed ponderanda*—that the Ministers ought to be chosen not by the major but the melior number; and that all ecclesiastical causes were to be tried in the same method, not by the majority but goodness of their Pastors or Presbyteries, synods and general assemblies. But this word goodness being equivocal, and not only signifying a moral or Christian perfection, but sometimes no more than the inclination or disposition of a man to this or that party (which was doubtless the meaning of those dissenters who expected advantage by it) the generality both of Ministers and people adhered to the former way; and though the authors and abettors of this new project were very industrious, yet it never amounted to the force (the Scots say the length) of a constitution, and had no stamp

either ecclesiastical or civil. Nor did the other sort of Presbytery continue very long, for A. D. 1662, the Bishops came in again, and notwithstanding the covenant and other engagements, were restored to their estates and power.

“ And truly (adds this author) to judge of things impartially, without prejudice or passion, this seems not only the most antient but the most natural government of the Church; and to omit here all other reasons to justify it, this we may observe by what has been said, that in the manifold revolutions and changes of the Church of Scotland, and the different schemes of government introduced in that nation, which were found violent and burdensome, so that the people would not bear them long, their final and common refuge was Episcopacy, as the proper government to recover breath again. And though the other forms which they lightly and in blind zeal sometimes took up, so much differed between themselves, and were seldom or never pitched upon twice together, yet Episcopacy, which so frequently they had recourse to, was much the same, had the same face without any material change; and this shows it to be somewhat more than a bare human appointment, which so often varies, and sometimes expires before the authors themselves.” He shows then the ill success of the Erastian system, which was also put forward, but met with little encouragement in parliament; and at length Presbytery was let in.

“ The cruelties used on this occasion, which some great ones connived at, if not encouraged, to insinuate thereby the zeal and inclination of the people, have been accounted for in divers letters written on that subject and sent from Scotland in the year 1689, which I shall not here transcribe. All that at present I aim at, is to show the unrea-

sonableness of so much heat and rudeness in shutting out Episcopacy, when its temper in Scotland is such, that though in name and jurisdiction it is called Episcopal, yet the way of its administration is so wide from Episcopacy elsewhere, that any (*such as he was who wrote this book, being called into Scotland, he says, fourteen years before its publication*) would take it for little else than Presbyterian; and an indifferent eye that sees the agreement in their worship and discipline, cannot but think it a dispute about words, which temporal interest and prejudice decides, to the shame of better reason and Christianity, which ought in all such cases to sit as judge."

Perhaps it may not be amiss to add here the suffrage of one of the most eminent Divines of the reign of Charles the First, Bishop Fern, a person of singular integrity and accomplishments.

"However insufficient," says this excellent Prelate, "men may be to any form of ecclesiastical polity, yet, surely there is something in the government of the Church which is obligatory and more binding than many perhaps may be aware of. We do not say that many things are not alterable in Church government, as being accidental and permitted to the prudence of a Church, and not left in particulars determined in apostolical precept or practice, yet we cannot but say that the Church was so far forth provided for in the point of government, that beside the general rules, some particulars thereof were left more essential, and to continue in the Church unalterable; which beside the strength and right they have from the ties of laws and customs of the kingdom, do bind in a more Divine way. Be it wisdom then to buy peace at any rate, yet, let us not drive the bargain blindfold, lest we do it to the loss of a good conscience,

or, if that be of less moment to the worldly-wise, to the forfeiture of our reason and judgment.

“That there is such a power of ordination and jurisdiction left in the Church by our Saviour Christ, and to continue in it for the ordaining and sending forth ministers of the Gospel, and for the ruling and governing of them, is confessed on all sides.”

“That the ministration of this power was not left indifferent to all Presbyters or Ministers of the Gospel, but remained to certain choice men, having thereby a prelacy or superiority over others, is a truth also current for fifteen hundred years in the Catholic Church, however in this last age opposed with all violence by Presbyterians. After many volumes written for the evidence of this truth, take it briefly thus :—our Lord, upon his departure, gave the twelve their full commission in these words, *as my Father hath sent me so send I you* : and thereby power was given to send others for the same purpose they were sent themselves ; that is, to plant and constitute Churches and appoint Pastors and Ministers in the same, and those to send others, and so to the world’s end. For this was an ordinary power to continue in the Church after the Apostles, and entrusted with certain choice men for the same purpose of sending others which was the settling of Episcopacy in the Church, for the more due and orderly government thereof. This is clear by the practice of the Apostles using this power, and by the continuance of the practice in those choice men that did succeed them.”

What shall now be added is from another Prelate of that age, whose works, printed at several times, have become so scarce that they are hardly to be met with : they shew a thorough knowledge of the subjects which he handles. Bishop Lucy, Bishop of St. David’s, published his first

treatise in answer to Hobbes, in 1657; and his treatise on the nature of a Minister, from which the following extracts will be made, in 1670.

He observes, that "the general term Minister applies to the Apostles in various places, and to our Lord, who assumed the priesthood, not of himself, but from the Father," and that "our Saviour did in very many things lay the platform of his ecclesiastical government, according to the Jewish polity." "It is impossible," saith he, "that a multitude should have juridical discretion." "The pre-eminence," saith he, "which I place in a Bishop, consists in these two things, the power of giving orders which a Presbyter has not, and the power of jurisdiction over such as are only Presbyters of the lower rank¹. St. Paul," saith he, "had been himself at Crete; he had laid the foundation of the Gospel, but he, being to go further into the world, leaves Titus to build upon this foundation; and he leaves him to do two things, that he should set in order,—correct or super-correct those things which were not perfected by himself. Here is Episcopacy in one piece. He had authority to correct, to set in order those things that were out of order; to correct what was amiss; then, secondly, to ordain elders in every city, not to appoint only, but to ordain authoritatively, to settle them. I do not know how a Bishop could be more exactly described. These duties of correcting and ordaining must needs be perpetual in the Church, and, therefore, could not constitute the nature of a temporary office."

He asks, "doth a corporation do this or that; let this lease; make that man free? The answer is, it is not

¹ P. 96.

done because they are combined on a covenant or agreement, but because they have a charter to do it¹:" and in reply to his adversary in New England, that the visible Churches of Christ are ecclesiastical or spiritual corporations, he says, "I deny this proposition absolutely, that every particular Church is a distinct corporation; they are members or branches of that great Corporation, the whole Catholic Church. Observe," saith he, "what makes a visible Church: if we consider the Church to be the body of Christ, and city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem; then, as we must conceive it as consisting of many men, we must conceive it likewise as having these men united in some form of government under Christ, and like a city, a house, a body, ruled by their King and Head, Christ, who by his inferior ministers and officers rules and governs this body, or this city. He is of this city, who is ruled and governed by the laws of this city,—of this house, who is governed by the economical discipline of this house,—of this body, who is guided and governed by the head of this body,—of Christ's Church, who is governed by the laws of His Church. We are not born citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, but re-born by baptism, by which we submit to that discipline and are incorporated into his body, which are the same in all places."

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ; for as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ, have put on Christ." "Here," saith he, "you see phrases wonderfully expressing the same thing; as God is considered in œconomics, so he is a Father, so likewise by baptism we are adopted the children of God; as Christ is the Head of the body, so we are baptized into him and

¹ P. 161.

engrafted (as the Spirit speaks elsewhere) into the body."

And as the ordinances of religion are so closely coupled with its ministrations and external government and discipline, he vindicates the value and importance of the relations contracted and sealed in baptism, and shows its moral character from the moral interest and duties immediately resulting from it under all fit circumstances.

He has also a significant remark which may apply to what has been said concerning the Church in Scotland, if indeed it were ever true, that for any period, through some disastrous circumstances, it wanted Bishops among them. "Particular Churches," saith he, "we may conceive to be sometimes without Bishops, yea, without Presbyters, as by the death of their Bishops or Presbyters; or by such persecutions as may so scatter them that they dare not show themselves in their Churches; and yet," saith he, "those Christians keeping their first faith, continue members of the Catholic Church, and of that universal Church which hath and ever shall have Bishops as long as the world stands."

THE END.

A CHARGE

DELIVERED



AT THE FIRST VISITATION

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF BRISTOL,

IN JULY, 1837,

BY

THOMAS THORP, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF BRISTOL.

LONDON:

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1837.

GLOUCESTER :
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TO
THE CLERGY
AND
CHURCHWARDENS
OF THE
ARCHDEACONRY OF BRISTOL

The following Charge

PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST

IS DEDICATED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

THE AUTHOR.

A CHARGE, &c.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

Although this is the first day on which it was possible for me to invite your attendance, consistently with technical impediments incident to a new Jurisdiction, as well as with previous and not less important obligations ; yet I feel it due both to you and to myself to assure you of the anxiety with which I have looked forward to the commencement of our official intercourse, however much I may now have reason, from the state of my health and occupations ever since my appointment, to wish that it had been longer delayed. With the greater part of this Archdeaconry I have been long and intimately enough acquainted to know that the vigilance of the Diocesan, and the judicious oversight of the Rural Deans, had left little room in matters of ordinary Administration for the inter-

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position of additional authority. Neither do I alledge the critical condition of the Church as a motive to any unusual zeal or promptitude in the discharge of settled obligations: for the interests of Religion committed to our custody, independently of external accidents, are of far too solemn and paramount a nature to render any such occasional excitement necessary to stimulate us to the due performance of our responsibility. But the construction of a new Jurisdiction out of districts previously unconnected seemed to demand the earliest practicable exercise of functions assigned with a view to greater unity, and more effective discipline and co-operation. It was accordingly my intention, and I did not resign it without regret, to have entered before now on a personal Visitation of the several Parishes, so as to be enabled to report, before our next assembling in the presence of our Diocesan, the entire Ecclesiastical condition of the Archdeaconry. From this design, which the state of my health has subsequently rendered impracticable, I was previously dissuaded by a consideration of the present unsettled condition of the Ecclesiastical Law, and the consequent expense and inconvenience which I should thus have caused to the Clergy and Parishes without any adequate results. Of the matters practically involved in such a visit of enquiry there are so many in which essential alterations were proposed by the Commissioners appointed seven years ago to enquire into the practice and

Jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts, that the adoption of their recommendations, anxiously expected by the Church, would, in many instances, have rendered my interference superfluous, though it might be necessary, by superseding the Ordinary's Jurisdiction. As I should be sorry in the execution of my duty to give directions which might prove either invidious or ineffectual, I could have no difficulty in deferring a proceeding equally unnecessary and premature, and which I hope, with the Divine blessing, to be better qualified to effect hereafter, when I shall have had the advantage of more personal intercourse with the Clergy, to whose kindness and experience I confidently look as the means and measure of my own usefulness; and shall have supplied the deficiency of my knowledge in regard to Parochial details from the answers returned by the Churchwardens to the Articles of Enquiry at this our first Synodical Assembly.

Such indeed seems to be the proper meaning and legitimate use of a General Visitation, and such the object of that address which, under the sanction of long custom, you would naturally expect from me to-day. It has been asked indeed by what right the Ecclesiastical Officer, whose functions are acknowledged to be originally derivative and ministerial, in place of confining himself to those duties of itinerating inspection which very early procured for him the title of the Bishop's Eye, occasionally usurps what is conceived to be the exclusive prero-

gative of his superior, by addressing those who are in all other respects at least his Brethren and equals, as one entitled to instruct, exhort, and admonish. It would be painful, and in the present feelings of the Clergy I am glad to think it is unnecessary, to suppose that such exceptions are taken, if taken at all, in any spirit of hostility to the effectual exercise of Church discipline, or the consolidation of those well-adjusted gradations of Ecclesiastical authority by which such discipline is maintained. On the contrary, it may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that there is nothing in any changes contemplated for the Church that has obtained more of general favour and approbation than those whose object has been to restore the efficiency of its internal regulations. The office of Rural Dean, which I find happily established in this Diocese, presents the first step in the ascending series of Ecclesiastical superintendence. This Officer, the representative of the Archpresbyter of early times, selected (generally for a limited period) from the body of the Presbyters on account of age or other qualifications, was intrusted with the duty of inspecting the rest of the Clergy and the Lay Officers of the Church in his district, and reporting thereon to the Bishop or Ordinary. The Proposals embodied at the Reformation in the Code called *Reformatio Legum*, and designed for the amendment of the discipline of the Church, but which, with the usual unhappy fortune of our Ecclesiastical improvements,

never acquired the force of law,¹ though they are highly valuable as tending to shew the spirit and intention of our Reformers, suggested the appointment of a Rural Archpresbyter in every Deanery, who should have authority to examine into the lives and manners of the Clergy and People; for which the circumstance of his being resident in the district, and not less that of his being armed only with the power of friendly recommendation, supported by appeal to a superior, supplied a source of wholesome discipline the least invidious and most effective. Similar attempts were subsequently made at various times by authority to restore this office, and especially by the Convocation in the reign of Queen Anne, to which body it was committed to consider and agree upon a Constitution to settle the office of Rural Dean; and by that Constitution, as proposed by the Upper House, his authority was considerably extended, though still in subordination to

¹ "The Bill (for making Ecclesiastical laws) wherein infinite pains had been taken by Archbishop Cranmer and divers of the learnedest men in King Edward's reign, had been often brought into that king's parliament, and had found difficulty to pass, though earnestly desired by the best men: nor had it better fortune in Elizabeth's reign. *Men did not then care to be restrained by Church discipline.*" Strype Ann. 1. i. p. 85. A.D. 1558. "For what reason this project proved abortive, they may easily guess, who consider how ready some men have all along been to blame the defects of our Church discipline, and how unwilling at the same time to supply them with proper provisions, lest they should want occasions of complaining."—*Atterbury's Charge*, 1708.

the Bishop, Archdeacon, or other Ordinary ; to whom he was to report any thing amiss in the fabric of the Church or the lives of the Clergy and Parishioners, with a view to their correction by the proper legal authority. As the Rural Dean had been originally the head of the Presbyters of his district, so the Archdeacon, as his name and super-added title manifest, was selected from the other Deacons on account of his age or other qualifications to attend more especially on the person of the Bishop, and superintend those inferior ministrations proper indeed to the Bishop, but for which his increasing avocations left him not sufficient leisure and opportunity. In this capacity his office is discoverable as early as the third century, having then relation not to the Diocese but to the See, while the Rural Discipline was generally administered by the Chorepiscopi or Rural Bishops, and by Rural Chapters of the Clergy presided over by the Archpresbyter in subordination to the common superior. But after the abolition of Rural Bishops² as early as the fourth century, and the consequent transfer

² This was effected in the Eastern Churches by an express Canon of the Provincial Council of Laodicea in 364, confirmed by the Œcumenical Council of Chalcedon : in the West, in practice not less early, though there is no Canon to that effect extant before the 6th, or perhaps the 12th, century. [See Burn Eccl. Law, v. Archdeacon, p. 94. Dansey Hor. Dec. Rur. vol. ii. p. 35.] The reason seems to have been the occasional collision as to jurisdiction between the Rural Bishop and his superior.

of their local functions to officers subsequently represented by the Rural Deans, the Archdeacon, as being near the person and in the confidence of the Bishop, naturally succeeded to much of their credit and authority; and was employed to visit the several districts of the Diocese for the purpose of reporting to the Diocesan; so that as early as the seventh century he had acquired the chief vicarial charge, his power being, however, at that time limited to inspection and inquiry, to which jurisdiction came afterwards to be added through Episcopal grants and compositions. These powers have been subsequently confirmed and augmented by usage, and by successive Canons and constitutions; of which all such as have been either made or received, and also practised, in this country, possess the force of statute as well as common law, by virtue of a statute of Henry VIII. framed with a view to revise and consolidate them, which provided that they should be law till that review should have taken place, and, therefore makes them law because it never was completed.³ The local jurisdiction possessed by Archdeacons in this country is probably to be assigned to the period of the Norman Conquest, at which the division of the Dioceses into Archdeaconries was effected in order to supply the place of the Bishop when summoned to attend the King in his great council: and so much of the

³ 25 Hen. VIII. c. 19.

Bishop's authority was then delegated to this his representative, that from that time he is called the Vicar of the Bishop; and from such delegated authority, confirmed by usage, derives an inherent right to hold, when the Bishop is hindered, the Annual Visitations, such as we are occupied in to-day. In fact he is so absolutely entitled to hold them, that one of his proper assigned duties is to frequent the Rural Chapters of the Clergy, and to instruct them where there is need; and he is expressly forbidden to do it more than once in the year, except in cases of emergency.⁴

I have risked appearing tedious in this account of the origin and duties of the Archdeacon, that you might be aware of the antiquity of the office, and the steps by which it arrived at its present condition as an instrument of discipline in the church. It is, however, true that his more ancient and appropriate function was that of Parochial Visitation, and for that he received those fees and procurations, which were in fact nothing else than a composition for the burden of his entertainment by

⁴See Canons 86, 119, 121; Gibson. Cod. ch. viii. p. 968; Dansey Hor. Dec. Rur. vol. ii. p. 106. It seems probable that the present standing Archidiaconal Courts had their rise in the Rural Chapters, which, being visited officially by the Archdeacon, "passed into solemn Visitations in which the Clergy of every Deanery should assemble once or twice a year." Kennett Paroch. Antiq. ii. p. 354. See also a letter in the Brit. Mag. Aug. 1837, p. 153.

the Parishes he successively visited in person. The statute law, which required from him the payment of Tenths, thereby recognised his title to the remainder, independently of the performance of that duty of Parochial Visitation by which the right to them was originally acquired :⁵ but his more appropriate visitatorial functions are exhibited in those perambulations which are calculated to make him accurately acquainted with the condition of the Ecclesiastical fabrics, the due performance of the Church ministrations, and the lives and manners of the Clergy and People. I have already stated it to be my wish not to fall short in this important part of my responsibility : nor shall I conceive that I have satisfied the demands of my duty, till I shall have made myself personally acquainted with every Church and Clergyman in the Archdeaconry ; to which end, as it will require time, of which I have never found a superfluity, and health, which has lately suffered somewhat from exertion, I shall not only have occasion for your patient and candid indulgence, but also for more than a common measure of the Divine blessing and assistance. When I reflect on the high opportunities with which such an officer is invested, in addition to those more mechanical functions I have just now detailed ; I mean the serious responsibility of examining the qualifications of Candidates for the Ministry, the duty of

⁴ Gibson's Charges.

exhorting them when engaged in it to unwearied faithfulness and zeal, the obligation to abstract himself from all undue prejudices and partialities, to view things as they appear to adversaries as well as to friends; to discover the bearing of public events on the state and prospects of the Church; to feel that he is stationed on an eminence to observe not only what is amiss and carelessly guarded in his own camp, but also what movements from without threaten its security, as one to whom other men cry, "Watchman, what of the night?"—I should indeed faint under the conscious want of "sufficiency for these things," if I did not feel that it is of God. He knows my deficiency, and will supply it; he pities my weakness, and will strengthen it; he sees my heart, and will sustain it. To him, of whom alone cometh every good gift, I freely own that my sufficiency (if any) is to be assigned; and believe that He will neither be extreme to mark what is amiss, when the mind is willing though the flesh be weak, nor will grudge the supply of his sustaining spirit to endeavours of a devoted heart, and to humble self-distrusting prayer.

I hope these observations will not appear inappropriate to the occasion, when the first Archdeacon of Bristol meets for the first time the Clergy with whom he is connected by a new ecclesiastical arrangement. To restore that office to its highest efficiency, and thereby relieve the Diocesan of part of the multiplied duties that press so heavily upon

him, augmented as they are daily by the rapid increase of Clergymen, Churches, and Population, and by the undivided representation of the civil interests of the Church, now excluded from a voice in the most potent branch of the Legislature by an unequal and arbitrary decree,—has been one of the objects contemplated by those to whom was committed the re-adjustment of the Discipline and Revenues of the Church. Though some very essential parts of these arrangements have been suddenly arrested through an influence to which I have no desire now more distinctly to allude, I believe I may assume that this part of our Church Reform has been accepted with general approbation by its friends and acknowledged by its enemies to leave no ground for objection. For my own part, I recognise the best promise of its efficiency in the fact of its being a restoration of ancient Discipline ; and I find in that promise another proof of the truth of which much observation and some experience have long since satisfied me, that there is no way of effecting beneficial Reforms of any kind so safe and durable, as by occasional resort to ancient principles, with just allowance for the accidents introduced by the march of time, and the inevitable changes in manners and opinion. Sure I am that no one who candidly regards the conduct and condition of the Clergy at the present time, and the religious tendencies of the people, can doubt that the Church has within herself the power, as the will, to set her-

self right, if she be let alone ; if the law, which demands of her public duties, will but extend to her no more than an equal share of public protection ; and the Legislature will not deem it to be the character of equal toleration to hand over one sect, (as some choose to call the National Church,) to the mercy of all the others, merely because it possesses revenues which it alone is bound to administer for the public good, with an inherent principle of self-reform, and the prescription of centuries.

It is quite unnecessary, if the time allowed, for me to make any remarks on the Articles of Inquiry, on which the Churchwardens will have founded their presentments : since I have taken as their ground-work those already in use in the Diocese, with only a few alterations such as carry their own explanation. With respect to those to whom they are addressed, I cannot neglect the opportunity which this occasion presents to me of testifying the strong opinion I have ever entertained of their deep interest, not inferior to that of the Clergy, in the civil administration of the affairs of the Church ; which, while it imposes on the Minister the solemnizing of its offices and the care of its spiritual duties, assigns no less to the Churchwarden, as his name imports, the guardianship of its temporal rights and interests : so that, exactly in the same degree as that Clergyman would be a traitor to his duty who should teach doctrines repugnant to and subversive of her creed, so would that Church-

warden be guilty of treachery who should accept the office without considering himself the trustee and protector of his Church. The duty of making presentments did not belong originally to them, but to certain of the parishioners named in the Citation, and called Testes Synodales, of whom the Ordinary was accustomed, before written presentments were resorted to, to ask such questions as seemed necessary with respect to the manners of the clergy and people. It was not till a short time before the Reformation that the Churchwardens began to present, and the custom was ratified by an express Canon in 1571. In their higher capacity they constitute a body corporate charged with the care of the goods, repairs, and ornaments of the church, and no less with a moral responsibility as to the behaviour of the Parishioners; inasmuch as they are required “diligently “to see that all the Parishioners duly resort to “Church, and there continue during the whole “time of divine service, and none to walk or stand “idle in the Churchyard: and to present all that “are slack in resorting to Church.” I am aware that the principle of toleration now happily established in this country renders these provisions with respect to such as do not belong to our communion impracticable, and therefore discharges those of whom I speak from their obligation: but nothing surely can discharge an honest man from the obligation of observing the solemn promise he has

voluntarily made, whether it be an oath or a declaration ; especially when by that act he has obtained possession of a trust confided expressly to his protection ; and therefore I have found it difficult to believe what I have heard, that in some parts of the island men have actually (by a contradiction in terms) been selected for the office of Churchwarden on account of their known hostility to the Church ! That they whose avowed object is to destroy the Church should do their best to arm such an one with the power, if they can find one unprincipled enough to accept it, is not so much a matter of astonishment ; but it must, I think, appear inconceivable to an unprejudiced mind, that any one should undertake a trust with the intention of violating it, or expect ever after to be viewed by his fellow-citizens in the ordinary dealings of life with any feelings but those of distrust and suspicion.— I hope that, while common decency excludes non-communicants from accepting that office, the growing attachment of our own people will lead the more intelligent and influential amongst them to offer themselves willingly to its administration : so that, instead of enemies treacherously sapping our foundations, we may have the just co-operation of our own laity in protecting our interests, and the benefit of their example and authority in promoting order and piety in our congregations. This is not the voice of the Clergy in the consciousness of danger soliciting their protection, but of the Church

claiming their co-operation because they are the Church. After what has been said, it is unnecessary to add that I should greatly deprecate the proposal, contained in the plan lately brought forward by the government for the extinction of the payment of Church Rates, by which the Churchwardens were to be discharged from attendance on Visitations. I do not see by what right the legislature should thus volunteer to dispense with an act of ecclesiastical discipline ; unless it be desirous to weaken still more, what those who love the Church and desire its efficiency must be anxious to strengthen and confirm, the legitimate interest of the laity in the concerns of that Church which in fact they constitute, and the affectionate intercourse between the clergy and people.

The notice of this topic leads me necessarily to another, on which I would gladly have been spared from animadverting. Two plans have been, as you know, for some time before the legislature for the final abolition of Church Rates, one of which (and I am thankful for it) was rejected by the Dissenters, because that, by transferring the payment of that impost to the national funds, it retained the principle of a national acknowledgment of religion. I say that I am glad of its rejection, because, after much and I believe impartial consideration, I have seen no reason to change the opinion I expressed to you by letter, that the question is one vital to the existence of the Established Church ; that, in the

language of our opponents, “ a National Church unsupported by the nation is an anomaly,” and that “ the Church Rate gone, the Establishment itself is an easy prey ;” and because no other mode has yet been proposed, nor from the nature of the case is it likely one can be found, in my opinion equally safe, just, popular, and permanent, for the purpose which all profess to be willing to concede or desirous to secure, namely the conservation of the fabric and decent ministrations of the Church. That the enemies of the Establishment were aware of this, the importunate urgency of their organs placed beyond a doubt ; and without recalling the exhausted argument respecting the duty of a state to support and countenance one particular form of Christianity, it was in the last degree important that all should see this to be really the question at issue. In the discussions subsequently carried on, much learning and research have been employed to ascertain the origin of the impost ; and we have reason to be thankful to those who have followed our antagonists into this ground, and effectually convicted them of mistake or misrepresentation. But to plain common sense this appears to be a very unnecessary and unprofitable exercise of ingenuity. In a people whose boasted freedom rests on nothing so much as that acknowledgment of rights on the ground of immemorial custom, which is denominated *common law*,—by which a man feels more secure in the possession of inherited property or privilege, than

any written statute could make him,—that among such a people, the liability to an impost immemorially paid by all property should be questioned on the ground of obscurity involving its original appropriation, is inconsistent with the practice of mankind in all similar cases, as well as with the reason of the case. Nobody denies that rates for the repairs of Churches have been raised without objection by our fathers and our grandfathers, and so on backwards immemorially from the present time, and for the same purpose, (namely the maintenance of religious worship in some way or other,) for which they are now required: if any changes of property in the lapse of ages have transferred the liability, that cannot have taken place without those who now bear it having at some time received an equivalent; and it is neither more nor less than a mixture of hypocrisy and dishonesty to attempt to shift a burden thus legally incurred, on the pretence that it is uncertain, (if it were so, which it is not,) whether in the Saxon times Church-shot were independent of and distinct from tithe, or on the ground that anciently persons not belonging to the Church were not taxed for its support, at a time when there were none recognized as not belonging to it at all. The very fact of the absence of direct provisions for enforcing the payment of Church Rates, proves more than such positive provisions would do the absence of any anticipation of a time when it would be refused. Can any man in his

senses believe that the successive generations of men or legislators, that either made or submitted to this mode of upholding the Church, (and that they did so up to the present time is a fact beyond dispute,) ever contemplated the possibility of any difficulty in enforcing that payment, or any opposition on the part of the parishioners ; or that, if they had so anticipated, they would have neglected to make provision for its enforcement ? There can be no reasonable doubt that, if it had been foreseen that there would be one day persons dissenting from the Religion itself, who would have it in their power to thwart this provision by undertaking the duty of enforcing it, care would have been taken to confine to Churchmen the office of Churchwarden. The obligation in England on the parishioners to repair the Church is so expressly and repeatedly declared, as to make it clear that no power was intended to be lodged in vestries as to allowing or refusing what was required for the necessary repairs, but only the right to apportion that sum equitably among those who were liable; and if it be a principle of common law and of common sense, that the former suffers no wrong without a remedy, nor imposes any obligation without lodging somewhere the faculty of enforcing it, I do not believe the difficulty of vindicating the principle in this case will be found so insuperable as it has been hastily supposed.

I do not presume, especially on such an occasion, to anticipate the result of the proposed attempt to

transfer from those who are now liable, to a portion of the clergy who are not, the cost of maintaining the fabrics of the Church ; but I know that there is the same obligation on the nation to provide for the spiritual instruction of the poor, as it owns in providing by poor laws for their temporal necessities ; and I see no reason why the state, boldly and honestly acknowledging that obligation, should not meet it by the same methods ; by fixing the Church Rate upon the Poor Rate, and strictly confining it to its real and proper purposes. At all events, such a proceeding would have the advantage of raising the amount required for repairs amongst those immediately interested in its use, and witnesses of its honest and æconomical application. The trifling amount of the impost is a serious consideration when viewed in contrast with a plan involving a cumbrous and expensive machinery, which it is inconceivable that the religious Dissenters would desire to put in operation, when they can obviate it at so small a sacrifice accompanied by so large a national good. We ask in this concession no more than we would willingly, nay than we do actually, give. I have not had time to make the necessary calculations, but I believe that the proportion which will fall upon Churchmen of the expenditure created by the new Registration Bill, and charged upon the Poor's Rates and the Consolidated Fund, and which is a charge upon Churchmen wholly for the advantage

of the Dissenters, (inasmuch as the bill was neither wanted nor desired by the former) will very greatly exceed the whole amount of the payments made by Dissenters (and for which they have received an equivalent) to the maintenance of the fabric of the Church. Do we as Churchmen complain of this? By no means! The legislature has seen fit to establish, at the solicitation and for the sole benefit of Dissenters, a civil registration, in the same manner as it votes an annual payment to the maintenance of the Dissenting Clergy and schools, and another to the Popish College at Maynooth; and I bear my share in this national obligation, sanctioned by the national representatives, on the same principle that I pay towards a road or a bridge that I never frequent, or to a political scheme of the government which I disapprove; and that although I pay a higher proportion and receive a less benefit, or perhaps no benefit at all. It is not surely too much to ask of our Dissenting brethren, as in all affection and sincerity I call them, to extend the same feelings towards us, by sharing in the support of a National Church, rather than attempt to force on us the infliction of a measure which must remove from the land the refreshings of a public acknowledgment of Christianity, and shake the sacredness and inviolability of all property: since there is no reason why the property of the Church, (which they acknowledge to be inadequate to its proper purposes), held as it is in trust for

national uses, coupled with the performance of public duties, and accessible to every the meanest subject of the Crown, should not have the protection of that legal inviolability which is granted to private property, accumulated without limit, exclusively reserved for private use, and not pretending to be administered under any such public obligation.

You are already acquainted with the act for marriages, and that for registering births, marriages, and deaths, which have within the last few days come into final operation ; and have probably felt it expedient to guard your respective flocks from any misconception or error into which they might be led by those provisions, especially from confounding a civil immunity conceded to others, with the exemption from religious duties still incumbent on themselves. It is right that they should know that these statutes, which were devised solely for the purpose of extending to Dissenters certain civil privileges from which they were previously excluded, do not affect members of the Church of England, nor impose on them any new obligations. They are precisely in the same position as to the ordinances of baptism, marriage, and burial, and to the civil rights affected by them, as if these acts had never been brought before the legislature. In the case of births there may be danger lest the more ignorant part of our people, who are always unwilling to forego any civil benefit of which they see their neighbours availing themselves, and which is

offered to them gratuitously, should be induced, for that reason alone, to have the child's name entered in the secular register ; and, for the purpose of escaping the payment of seven shillings and sixpence required after the lapse of six weeks from the birth, should be led afterwards to dispense with, as unnecessary, the holy rite of admission into the Church by baptism. I conceive it to be our plain duty to second the intentions of the legislature in every wholesome provision not derogatory to the interests of religion ; nor is there any reason why our people should not benefit by the civil advantages of the secular registration, if there be any, as well as their dissenting brethren ; indeed, on the contrary, I should hope to turn this enactment into a motive to them to bring their children at an earlier period after birth than has been customary to the baptismal font, since they may, if they choose, add the civil to the religious act, if both are effected within forty-two days of the birth of the child ; after which period the registration of the baptismal name will entail the payment of two shillings, and a delay of six months from the birth will make it impossible to register at all. It is to be remembered, however, that in case of giving notice of a birth or death to the registrar, that registration will not be afterwards producible in evidence unless the notice be signed by the regular informant. On your part you will, I doubt not, be careful to continue the entries in the church registers, and to transmit them not less punctually

than before ; and will not admit the practice, which I am told prevails in some parts of the country, of administering the rite of baptism without making an entry of it in the register at the time, as was enjoined in the act which regulated your previous practice. It will be your duty, moreover, to instruct your people that, though there is no obligation upon them to give notice of a birth or death, they must answer any enquiries made of them by the Registrar touching these particulars. But above all, you will affectionately exhort them, if indeed they need such exhortation, not to suffer any civil act of this kind to cause them to neglect the initiation of their offspring in the visible Church of Christ by the appointed Sacrament of Baptism ; nor to dispense with the religious sanction of the marriage vow ; nor to prefer any other resting place for their earthly remains, to that which lies under the turf that covers the ashes of their fathers : not in short in any respect, through an unnecessary conformity to a provision not intended for their advantage nor obligatory upon their obedience, to trifle with their high privileges as baptised members of the Apostolical Church, which their country has cherished for their benefit during so many generations.

There is one of the provisions affecting your own ministrations on which an awkward ambiguity rested under the act of last year, and which has been removed by the act as amended and passed within a few days ; I mean that which relates to

marriages solemnized by a Clergyman of the Establishment on the production of the Registrar's certificate. I need not tell you that the act expressly reserves in this, as in all other matters, the validity of the Church's ordinances as prescribed by the Rubric, and that marriages may still be solemnized as usual after the publication of banns or on the Surrogate's licence; and, inasmuch as the first clause in the Marriage Act not only permitted but required that "all the rules prescribed by the Rubric concerning the solemnization of marriages shall continue to be duly observed by every person in holy orders of the Church of England," it was at least questionable whether a Clergyman would not have been justified under that act in refusing to marry any persons without either banns or licence. To remove that ambiguity, and to relieve the Clergyman from a necessity which must in some cases appear inconsistent with his sacred calling, a provision was proposed in this session by our Diocesan to the effect that nothing in the act should be held to compel any Clergyman of the Established Church to solemnize marriages between parties whose banns had not been legally published according to the rubric, or who had not duly obtained a licence; but this provision was not adopted. However much therefore we may deprecate this interference with the order and authorized discipline of our Church, and whatever danger to the community we may anticipate from the facilities offered to clandestine

marriages under the present statute, it is clear that you are now obliged to receive the Registrar's certificate as authority to solemnize a marriage equivalent to the former publication by banns. It is not, I think, probable that many instances will occur in which this will be required; as it can scarcely be expected that parties desiring to enter into that engagement with the religious sanction of the Church would wish to exchange the long accustomed appeal to the congregation for that publication before the Guardians of the Poor which was substituted for it in the former act; a provision evidently powerless to secure any thing like publicity, even where such Guardians were existing, and should regularly meet: to say nothing of the strange oversight by which the framers of the act forgot that in some parts of the country there were as yet no Guardians at all. It has, however, been repealed in the act as recently amended, and there is now no other publication of marriages than by the suspension of the names of the parties in the office of the Guardians, where there are any, and where there are no Guardians, in the office of the Registrar till Unions shall be formed. Sincerely as I rejoice in the removal of all unnecessary disabilities from those who differ from me only in seeking to worship God in a way more agreeable to their own religious scruples, I cannot but lament that these concessions should have been, perhaps unavoidably, connected with other provisions calculated to diminish the

reverence for the house of God, through the removal of what we consider a religious ceremony from places consecrated to religion ; through the opportunities, and almost temptations, thus held out to the formation of improper contracts, if not of vicious connexions ; and through the tendency of all such merely secular enactments to destroy the public respect for the sanctions of religion as the proper guardian of the manners and lives of the citizens ; nor does it lessen my sorrow and alarm, to observe that such results, however they may have been effected under the name and authority of Reform, necessarily imply a settled departure from the principles of the Reformation ; nor is there any thing consolatory in the recollection of the only precedent for such a practice that I know of in our history, when marriages were celebrated before two justices of the peace during the usurpation, though “for what purpose,” as Paley, who could not be charged with bigotry or illiberality, observes, “this novelty “ was introduced, except to degrade the Clergy, “ did not” to him “appear.”

I cannot express to you, my Reverend Brethren, how painful it has been to my feelings to have occupied you so long on subjects repugnant to Christian charity and to our professional habits and character, especially when they have detained me from others far more congenial to the spirit and purpose of our assembling. For I wished very earnestly to have conferred with you on many topics important, as

I believe, to your personal comforts and the efficacy of your ministrations, as well as to have communicated counsels tending to our mutual consolation and edifying, and calculated to confirm us in the qualities required by the times in which we live,—patience in enduring wrong, boldness in declaring truth, an uncompromising spirit in asserting the rights of our Church, and at the same time, in our intercourse with our brethren, a “moderation that shall be known unto all men.” On these topics I must seek another opportunity of communicating the thoughts that have occurred to me; nor will you, I trust, think any further apology necessary for having been diverted from them at the present moment by matters so vital to the general interests of the Establishment.

The usefulness of the Church is so intimately connected, while it is recognised as a National Establishment, with the march of political events, that it is impossible to leave these out of the account in any review of our united duties and operations. We live under a new reign. The portals of the grave have scarcely closed upon a monarch who proved himself, during a brief but eventful administration, to be one of a race conscious of the obligation imposed on them to protect the Church of England, as having been called on that condition to occupy the throne of these realms. The whole nation views with the deepest interest and sympathy the spectacle of a youthful Princess, embracing, in spite of

her sex, I trust with no fainting heart or feeble hands, the reins which guide the destinies of the Church and of a mighty and high-minded nation. She has begun her reign with a modest dignity and patriotism which give promise to her subjects of the stability of her principles of government, and the consequent permanence of her throne. From the hopeful anticipations of equal protection it cannot be that the Church holds itself excluded. It is still the pure Reformed Protestant Church, the pillar and bulwark of the faith, for which her fathers fought, and which it is part of her sacred duty to defend. God bless the Queen! May she realise her name only in those peaceful victories which constitute a nation's truest happiness, and are the brightest gem in a monarch's crown. As a Queen, she will protect the Church, whose influence has ever been foremost in the cause of loyalty and order; as a Woman, she will love the Church, whose holy sanctions guard the peace and purity of domestic life; as a Protestant and a Churchwoman, she will cherish the Church, from whose faithful people morning and evening orisons will rise anxiously to heaven for God's directing grace to sustain their youthful Queen; ever mindful of those spiritual privileges, of which she is the guardian to her subjects as well as of their civil rights and temporal blessings, and of that eternal rest to the people of God, to which

THE NATION THAT KEEPETH THE TRUTH, and that alone, SHALL ENTER IN.

POSTSCRIPT.*

Before we meet again, the Archdeaconry will have assumed its final and just proportions by the addition of the two adjacent Deaneries of Cricklade and Malmesbury transferred to it from the Diocese

* The impediments alluded to in the beginning of this Charge, aggravated by continued indisposition and unremitted engagements, having prevented my completing it before delivery, I have been compelled to transfer to a Postscript the mention of some topics, on which, as I spoke on them without preparation, I must have expressed myself in different terms at the different Deaneries; but which, having been actually addressed to those meetings, I do not feel myself at liberty, even independently of their importance, to omit altogether. What follows will be recognised, I trust, substantially, if not literally, as identical with what was spoken by me either from the altar, or at the subsequent meetings of the Clergy in the afternoon. I am precluded from inserting it in its proper place (page 30), in consequence of that portion of the Charge which was committed to writing before delivery having been printed during my absence while engaged in attendance on the Bishop during his progress on Confirmations, and before I was sufficiently well and at leisure to put the rest on paper.

At the same time, I have availed myself of this opportunity of adding the results of observations I have been enabled to make in the course of a friendly visitation of some parts of the Archdeaconry.

of Salisbury. I regret that the arrangements for this purpose, which were only made known to me within the last few days when on my journey hither, were not completed till it was too late for me either to visit those districts, or to defer my Visitation till they could be included. Some changes are involved in these arrangements, to which I can only invite the attention of the Clergy, especially in relation to subscriptions and charities at present connected with jurisdictions from which the parties concerned in them have been disunited, and of which it seems to be desirable that the payments and advantages should be transferred, where it is practicable, to the Diocese and Archdeaconry to which these parties now belong. In the matter of charities endowed, or specially appropriated, difficulties may present themselves which it may possibly require the aid of the legislature to remove; but these, and the methods of obviating them, can be known to none so well as to the Clergy there resident; and it will give me much pleasure to attend to any suggestions which may occur to their better experience. With respect to charitable associations, I believe they are in general so similarly supported in the different Dioceses, that their contributing members will probably find no diminution of their usefulness by transferring their names to the corresponding Societies in the jurisdiction to which they are newly attached. The Diocese of Gloucester was previously far from

deficient in provisions, both for the relief of our afflicted and necessitous brethren, and for those benevolent associations of a public nature which engage more particularly the support and influence of the Clergy: and I hope, when the technical impediments to such consolidation shall have been removed, to see the Archdeaconry of Bristol conspicuous for a vigorous and effective application of the spirit of combination in works of piety and benevolence.

Under this head I would earnestly urge the claims of such societies as provide for the relief of the distressed members of our profession, and especially those who are disabled by some infirmity or unforeseen calamity from deriving a maintenance from it, while they are excluded from all others; and in whom the nature of their calling requires a decent appearance, which under such circumstances they are unable to maintain. In a more enlarged view, indeed, this topic suggests considerations which, though somewhat irrelevant here, and belonging to a higher tribunal, are too near to my heart to be passed without notice. I allude to the necessity of providing for Incumbents, of whatever degree, who are disabled by age or infirmity from exercising with due efficiency their important functions. I believe the Church to have suffered in public esteem and usefulness from nothing so much as from the unavoidable neglect or inefficiency arising from this cause. There is no room for de-

licacy here. The remark extends to the highest order in the Church, and more particularly to that in proportion to its superior influence and responsibility. There seems to be no reason why the same practice which is applied in the case of the highest Legal functionaries, should not be resorted to in the case of the Episcopal order, by assigning a retiring pension out of the revenues of the Church, sufficient to operate as an inducement to the individual to withdraw himself without any sensibly diminished comforts or respect, when he begins to find his strength incompetent to the labours and anxieties of his position. Such a provision, extended to the body of the Clergy, would supply the same principle of continual vigour and freshness to the ministry of the Church, as is secured by the necessity of the case to the profession of Medicine and the Bar.

Connected in like manner with our professional comfort and respectability is another suggestion which I venture to make for the establishment of an Ecclesiastical Library for the use of the Clergy of the Archdeaconry. I am spared the necessity of entering into any details, as I had intended, by the formation of a similar institution in the sister Archdeaconry of Gloucester. It may be hoped that such an Establishment, undertaken centrally at first, may be afterwards extended generally to the several Deaneries.

In the new parts of this Archdeaconry I have observed an irregularity which has, I believe, in

conformity with the wish expressed by our Diocesan at his two Visitations, now become nearly obsolete in the rest of the Diocese ; I allude to that of Curates officiating without a license. It would be gratifying to find that this simple notice, of what is probably in most cases an inadvertence, should leave the Bishop no ground of dissatisfaction on this head, when he shall visit in his own person in the ensuing year. . A stricter attention to the Canon which enjoins the Churchwardens to keep a list of those who officiate in the Church, is calculated to afford a salutary check upon any undue license in this particular ; and I shall expect to see such a list kept in every Church, (which of those I have visited this year I have only found in one,) whenever I shall be at liberty to visit parochially.

I must not omit to congratulate you on the establishment of a Society for providing additional Churches and Chapels in the poor and populous districts of the Diocese. I know how sensibly our Bishop feels the extraordinary success that attended his appeal, and the satisfaction he derives from seeing the instrument he had constructed already in effective operation ; and the Clergy have on this, as on all similar occasions, generally set an example of liberality even “beyond their power ;” which nothing but the urgent want of such an example somewhere could fairly justify : for my own part, however, I have never disguised my opinion, that neither the legislature nor the laity have yet shewn

themselves conscious of the *extent* of that obligation which lies upon *them* to repair a long national neglect, and *by one great national effort* to restore the houses of God in the land. It is not by contributions such as are given without being missed to a case of temporary distress, that our wealthy landholders, and merchants whose navies burden the sea, can either manifest their gratitude for augmented temporal blessings, or effectually supply to their fellow citizens that spiritual superintendence which is necessary for their soul's health, as well as the best guarantee of national happiness and social order. When we observe what has been done previously to the formation of this Society in this hitherto small Diocese during the seven years of its present administration, in which eight new Churches or Chapels have been erected, and two more will shortly be ready for consecration, and in which the number of resident Clergy, notwithstanding the general extreme poverty of the benefices, has been increased by forty-four, (nearly one-sixth of the whole,) we need not despair of the ultimate accomplishment of that labour of love, whose object is to supply the whole Nation with pastoral instruction; especially if that enlarged munificence and co-operation, which we claim from our wealthy laity for the *Church Building Societies*, be extended to another, generally known as the *Clergy Aid Society*, lately instituted, (as you are aware,) under the presidency of the Bishops of our Church, "for

promoting the employment of additional Curates in populous places." I do not conceive it possible to find in its objects or provisions any one which does not command the sympathy of every Churchman, while it keeps clear of some which seemed to involve the elements of future division ; and on that account I greatly regret that the united zeal and energies of all our brethren should not have been made to flow in the same channel. It may indeed be necessary, and in the end perhaps more diffusive of Christian truth, that different men should pursue the same benevolent purposes by different means ; but we have at least no right to complain of the *apathy* of Institutions designed to promote objects we approve, if we studiously deny them the benefit of our own active and cordial support. On the whole question of Religious Association, so honourably characteristic of our times, I deem it but candid to avow the conclusion at which after long and anxious consideration I have arrived ; and, believing that in connection with the existence of competing Religious Associations, while there is much to rejoice in, there is something to fear and to regret, especially if they are liable to generate any exclusive or disassociating spirit, I trust that if I feel myself compelled by duty to my Church to give my undivided services to those societies which act in strict subordination to her discipline, I shall not be supposed the less on that account to wish " God speed " to all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,

nor to be behind any of them in my acknowledgment of the obligation laid upon a Christian Church to "preach the gospel to every creature," but "especially to them that are of the household of faith." On the contrary, I should consider it my right and my duty to expect in return from those societies to which I had given an undivided preference, the application of their means to the effecting of all just and practical objects contemplated by other similar Associations.

The efforts, however, whether of societies or individuals, to restore throughout the land the effective ministrations of the Church, must be comparatively powerless unless supported by the authority of the legislature; and we may surely hope that of the measures of Church improvement prepared in the last session by the Church Commissioners, and proposed to parliament by the government, but afterwards withdrawn, so much at least as is acknowledged by all parties to be calculated to increase the Church's efficiency, and is objected to by none, may be suffered to proceed without further hindrance to acquire the force of law. One of the provisions to which I allude, contained in the bill for regulating pluralities and residence, would have greatly facilitated the building of residence-houses in the poorer benefices, by giving a power of mortgaging the glebe to the amount of three times the value of the living, (where the income should not exceed £300,) and extending the

repayment over thirty years ; while another authorized the Bishop to sequester upon the next avoidance a benefice under £200, possessing no means of residence for a clergyman, till a sufficient house should be built ; and a third provided for the supply of a competent curate in certain cases where the duties were inadequately performed. I could point to some striking and painful instances of actual mischief caused by this delay, and of flagrant abuses perpetuated which these remedies would have already removed, that have occurred recently within my own observation, were I not restrained by the delicacy due to the feelings of individuals, and by the wish to avoid even the imputation of any but strictly professional motives ; though I cannot but remind you, that while *the Church bears the blame* of gross cases of plurality, non-residence, and ministerial delinquency, which her spiritual rulers have not the power to remove, the parties most clamorous in decrying her abuses are the same that have obstructed her in her own efforts for reform.

In thus anticipating a large increase in the number of our Churches and glebe houses, we have reason to rejoice that it has been preceded by a reform in architectural taste, through which we may hope to see the sacred edifices of the establishment, even when modest in their dimensions, still marked by simple dignity, chaste proportions, and purity of style, so worthy of their object, and so conducive to vital piety ; and the residence of the clergyman

distinguished, (as well as removed,) from other domestic buildings, so as to point it out as the abode of one entitled to a separate provision for his comfort and respectability, as having a public example to set, and public duties to discharge. The parsonage houses which have been newly erected are more creditable to those to whose exertions and munificence they are due than I can express, and not least to the Clergy themselves; whose liberality in sinking a large amount of their private property, (seldom very considerable,) to endow their parishes in perpetuity with a fit residence for a minister, of which individually they can at most have only a life enjoyment, is one of those many uncounted means whereby their position in society contributes indirectly to the usefulness of the Church. I earnestly advise that, wherever it is practicable, measures be adopted for building a new house rather than repairing an old one, even though it should involve some delay. No one can have observed either the moral importance to the parish of a decent and comfortable residence for its minister, nor the extreme inadequacy and inconvenience of most of the old parsonage houses, without deprecating that system of perpetual patching and addition, which necessarily results from the precarious tenure of a life-possessor; and which it will well deserve the care of the Legislature to obviate on the principle adopted in Scotland, as soon as it shall have leisure to attend to matters of practical benefit to the

Church. It must be remembered that an entire revolution has taken place in the domestic architecture of the country, as well as in the habits and the wants by which in fact it has been produced ; but that it has not yet extended generally to the residences of the Clergy, which exhibit in many instances such accommodation as, though it might suit very well the period at which they were erected, is totally inadequate to the increased demands upon their personal sacrifices, and public station.

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By the same Author.

THREE SERMONS preached before the University of Cambridge ;

- (1) **ON OBSOLETE RULES.**
- (2) **ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION :** (in behalf of the King's Letter for the Church Building Society).
- (3) **ON THE PROFITABLENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.**

Also, "**COLLEGE CHAPEL,**" and "**TWO COMMEMORATION SERMONS**" preached in the Chapel of Trinity College :

And, "**INDIVIDUAL VICE SOCIAL SIN :**" a Sermon preached for the Relief of the Poor at Leeds.

C H A R G E
 TO THE
CLERGY AND CHURCHWARDENS
 OF THE
PECULIARS
 OF THE
BISHOP OF DURHAM,
 AND OF THE
DEAN AND CHAPTER OF DURHAM,
 IN
ALLERTON AND ALLERTONSHIRE ;
 DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF NORTHALLERTON,



On Wednesday, the 30th of August,

BY THE
REV. GEO. TOWNSEND, M. A.
 MASTER KEEPER OF THE PECULIAR OF ALLERTON AND ALLERTONSHIRE.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY PRESENT.

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1837.

TO THE CLERGY

OF THE PECULIARS OF THE BISHOP OF DURHAM,
AND OF THE DEAN AND CHAPTER OF DURHAM,
IN ALLERTON AND ALLERTONSHIRE,

THIS CHARGE,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR

OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL

FRIEND AND SERVANT,

GEO. TOWNSEND.

CHARGE, &c.



MY reverend brethren, and you, the Churchwardens of this Peculiar of Northallerton, and its neighbourhood.

We have met this morning, my brethren and friends, according to our yearly custom, to transact the common business of our several churches, with respect to the appointment of new churchwardens, and the resignation of their offices, by the churchwardens, who have already served. We have met also to inquire, whether there may be any notice of circumstances, which may demand attention, and lead to improvement. Because we are so few in number, it has been our custom in former years to meet only in the vestry, and there, (if it be necessary,) that I should speak to you on any point which might be worthy of consideration. I have, however, determined on the present occasion to speak to you in this more formal manner, because the other mode of addressing you, personally and individually, as the churchwardens delivered their papers, and as the names of the clergy were called over, not being sufficiently public; it has pleased those who are on the watch to observe, and who have misunderstood our more quiet proceedings, to affirm, in the newspapers of the neighbouring districts, that the duty of the visitation was neglected and disregarded. We live in days, my Christian friends, when it is especially

necessary that "*our good shall not be evil spoken of*;" and therefore, though I am still of opinion, that I might have fitly spoken the few observations, which it may be necessary to make, in the humble and retired vestry, on account of the fewness of our numbers: I have resolved to conduct the visitation in this more open and public manner, that all may see our proceedings, and hear the reflections which I may deem it right to submit to you.

Permit me to explain in the first place, before I call upon you to remember the nature of the duties which are severally imposed upon you, the reasons, on account of which a visitation is held in this place, by the official representative of the Dean and Chapter of Durham.

It was the custom in former ages that the Bishops of their respective dioceses visited the churches, and the clergy, at certain seasons, to know whether the statutes, and laws of the church, were properly observed. When, however, it so happened, that a parish or a manor belonged to another Bishop, he, and not the diocesan, was accustomed to visit his own parish, or manor. We are in the diocese of York. The Archbishop of York therefore would have been the proper person to hold a visitation in this place, as well as in the other parts of his diocese. The parish or manor of Northallerton, however, was granted from the very earliest times of our history to the Bishops of Durham, who were accustomed therefore to superintend this district, and certain other places in this neighbourhood. One of the Bishops of Durham, many centuries ago, gave to the convent of Durham a part of his jurisdiction. The Dean and Chapter of Durham, as their successors, possess the same power; and it is by virtue of that power, as their representative, that I am enabled to require the churchwardens to bring in their papers, and the clergy of the Peculiar also, to be present in the church this day. I mention these things because some have inquired, by what authority, the visitation was held here. I believe that the laws respecting these kinds of peculiar ecclesiastical jurisdiction, are about to be either

materially altered, or entirely abolished. When that is done, the authority of the Master Keeper of Northallerton, as the representative of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, will cease. Until, however, the law is altered, the duty I am fulfilling will remain : and it rests, you will now perceive, on the same foundation as any other authority of a similar kind, whether of a Dean and Chapter, of a Bishop, or of an Archbishop, which may be exercised elsewhere. It rests upon the foundation of prescription and custom, and therefore of law ; which may be traced with more or less exactness, for nearly a thousand years, to the period before the Norman conquest.

I shall first, then, address myself to the churchwardens. Your duty, my friends, in the present day is restricted, with one exception, to very humble though very important, because very useful, inquiries ; respecting the repairs and state of the fabric of the church, the condition of the churchyards, of the books, the ornaments, and other property of the church. Because the fabric of the church, and the things which thus belong to the due administration of its services, concern the whole parish, and not a portion only ; it is your privilege to require the payment of a rate, for the due preservation of those things which appertain to the people at large. In former days you were required to attend to three other very important duties. The churchwardens were required to present to the Bishop the names of all persons who were guilty of heresy in opinion, and of wickedness, or immorality in conduct. They were the persons, also, who were entitled to apportion to the parishioners the space which was enclosed within the church walls, which were formerly occupied by moveable seats, then by benches, and in latter days by pews. The first of these duties, that of presenting persons who held heretical opinions, is removed by the Toleration act : the second, that of presenting charges against a parishioner for immorality of life, is attended with so many difficulties, in consequence of the law of libel, that it is almost entirely superseded : and the third, respecting the disposal of pews, is so much hindered by the obscurity of the

laws respecting pews, that much of this part of the duty of the churchwardens, may be said to be superseded also. There is, however, another part of your duty which I hope will never be superseded ; though it is one, which I trust you will never find occasion to exercise. You are the persons who are required by the public law, to present and report to the Bishops, or to their various representatives, the names of those clergymen, who may either dishonour themselves, by unworthy conduct, or who shall depart in their administering divine service, from the order and rubric, of the church. Your superintendence over the laity of our parishes has been taken away, while it is continued over us, the clergy. You are the representatives of our parishioners ; and while the churchwardens therefore do their duty, every clergyman in the country may be said to be under the vigilant control and inspection of his people. If the clergy, either by conduct, or by departing from the right order of the church, give offence to the congregation ; the remedy is in the hands of the people, by means of the churchwardens of the place. This was the exception to which I alluded, when I said that the churchwardens were now restricted to the performance, of more humble duties. Not only is it their duty to pay attention to the fabric, the burial ground, the books, and goods, and cleanliness of the churches ; it is their duty to take care that the higher services of the church are regarded, in the due administration of the sacraments, the offering up of the prayers, the right observance of the duties of the pulpit as directed by the church, and the inspection to a certain extent also, of the manners and conduct of the minister. I mention these things, not merely to remind you of your duties, but that you and your people, and I wish I could say all the people of England, might perceive ; that when a rate is demanded of our parishes for the support of the fabric, and other expenses of the public worship : they have in you, as the guardians of the parishes, full and sufficient security, that their money is expended, not to please, nor to support the clergyman, not to maintain any extravagant charges, but that it is demanded, to uphold the public worship of God ; while the most ample pledge is

afforded which the law can give, that the clergy do their duty. And I call upon you to discharge your office properly, not merely as a matter of form, but as a Christian service. Take care that the church-yards are kept in cleanliness and order, as is becoming the last home of your friends and kindred, who have departed this life, in the faith, and fear, of God. Provide things honest and decent in the state of the tables of the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer, and the creed. See that the bibles and prayer books be well kept. Be attentive in your own conduct to morality, to your public performance of religious duties, and to your place as church-wardens in the churches to which you belong, both in the morning and evening services. Be in spirit what you are in name, the wardens of the spiritual interests of the church, in all things which belong to the respectable upholding of the appendages, to our public worship. Attend to these things, not merely as a duty, but as a privilege; for it is an honour, in any way whatever, to bestow the least attention and care to the house of God, and the things of God. Act from principle, and from a sense of duty to Him; and then, that office which is now too much regarded as a mere form, will become an efficient, faithful, and valuable aid, to the common cause of the religion, which, by God's mercy, has been so long established among us. You will thus do good to your parishes; and I am sure, I need not add, that this good will be much increased, if your religious example in private life, and your constant observance of family worship at home, should prove that principle to all who observe your firm, and faithful adherence, to the public performance of the wardenship, of your respective churches.

With hesitation and fear and trembling, I address myself to my brethren of the clergy; yet I am sure they will not deem me guilty of presumption, when, in the discharge of my duty, I remind them of some few points which I cannot but think they will do well to consider; with reference to their discharge of their clerical duties in the church, as well as to their conduct in the world.

The clerical duties which we are required to perform in the church, may be divided, into those connected with the rubric, the duty of catechising, and the duty of preaching.

With respect to the first of these, I have heard with surprise and grief, that several of our brethren in the South, believing themselves to be justified by the customs of a primitive antiquity, have lately made several alterations, which must to the people of their congregations be regarded as innovations; and which have begun a new era, of observances of very questionable utility to the church. Some have added to the surplice a peculiar kind of cross, others have placed the bread and wine on a small additional table near the Lord's table or altar, others have introduced needless bowings, and unusual attitudes of devotion. I will not enter into the question whether they be right or wrong in attempting to revive the usages of antiquity among us: though if they did so, by petition, or by representation to the ecclesiastical authorities, and in deference to the ecclesiastical laws of their country, more might be said in their defence, than I at least can now venture to say—and I am sure that if this indefinite principle be acted upon, we should be able to justify ourselves in reviving the use of the cope, the dalmatic, the chesible, the maniple, the frontal, and many other things which are defensible from a high antiquity; but which are now justly disused as being unnecessary ornaments to the priestly dress—this advice, however, I give you, never to adopt, without the express sanction of our ecclesiastical superiors, and without an alteration in the law, the dresses and the customs of any real, or supposed antiquity. Our reformers, we may believe, had good reasons for the rejection of the more mystical or pompous dresses; and we are bound, as churchmen, to submit to the ordinances of the church; and not to surprise our congregations by adopting, according to our private view of their propriety or expediency, either the customs, or dresses, of the ages that are past.

On the question of placing the bread and wine on a small table near the Lord's table, or altar, I shall only say there is no necessity for the practice. The rubric commands us to place the bread and wine on the table, and this may be done by our merely raising the plate of bread, after it has been put on the table by the churchwardens, and by pouring out the wine ourselves according to our usual custom. I cannot here enter upon the question concerning sacrifice, which is involved in the custom to which I now allude, and with which I have no doubt you are familiar; I would however recommend that no alteration be made at any time but that which is indispensable and useful; and especially that no new bowings, no new strange devotional attitudes, be introduced on any account, unless they be commanded by law. Uniformity in worship is always desirable, and obedience to the existing law is the best security for obtaining it. Observe the rubric as much as possible. Adhere to the customs which have been long used and those only. Be assured that an universal dissolution of the peace, order, and harmony, which a religious establishment ought to produce among both the people, and clergy will take place; if every clergyman in every parish may study remote antiquity, and draw from its traditions, strange dresses, obsolete observances, or useless modes of expressing devotion.

Catechising, I consider to be as useful and as important as preaching; and I trust it will ever be regarded in this light, by the clergy of the established church. It is most expressly commanded by the church, as an essential part of our duty.

In venturing to speak to you on the subject of the best mode of preaching, I shall only mention that which I have found to be most useful.

Preaching may be considered either as general, particular, or rubrical. Each has its advantages, but the last is most especially useful.

General preaching is the discussion, and the exhortation founded upon that discussion, of the more extended topics of revelation; such as the evidences of Christianity, the mysterious doctrines of the gospel, the difficulties of scripture, or the four last things, death and judgment, and heaven and hell. *Particular preaching* is the attempt to derive useful instruction from the events and circumstances, the deaths and changes, which take place in a parish. *Rubrical preaching*, which may always be so conducted as to include the advantages of the other two, is the selecting a subject from some part of the services of the day, and identifying the instructions of the church with the general, or particular inferences, derivable from gospel truth. By acting on this latter plan, we always find a subject which has been already submitted, in part, to the attention of the people. We save much time by preventing the destruction of thought which arises from our not being easily able, to decide on the choice of a subject. We proceed through the whole order of the great events recorded in the New Testament, for we begin with the birth of Christ, and after considering the great events of his life, we dwell upon his passion and his death, his resurrection and ascension, the doctrine of the influences of the Holy Spirit, and of the Trinity; and then, for nearly six months, we have the whole range of moral and religious subjects, which are founded upon our reception of these great truths of Christianity. No instruction appears to me to be more useful, than that which thus identifies the services of the church, with the general and particular lessons, which may be easily introduced in our discourses. I have found it by experience to be best adapted to the guidance of the young and old. It presents a complete course of theology to clergymen, as well as of spiritual teaching for the people. It contains every object which the whole Bible, and our scriptural church can propose, for the benefit of our people. And I shall only add, with respect to sermons, that those sermons are most easily remembered, which are most methodically divided. Method may sometimes repress eloquence, or that continuous

stream of animated language which is generally denominated eloquence; but it need not necessarily do even this: and it so assists the memory, that an attentive child may remember the whole sermon. He indeed is the best preacher, whose sermon shall so impress, by its clearness of arrangement and appropriateness of subject, the mind of the humbler peasant; that he may take home to those whom he left at the fire-side, the chief lessons enforced by the preacher.

The laws of the country ought never to be opposed, nor, if possible, even alluded to from the pulpit: but if it should so be that such a subject as the propriety of marrying, without reference to the blessing of God, be brought before a parish; every clergyman would be justified, in submitting to his people this general truth, that marriage is of divine institution—and that, it is desecrated to permitted concubinage, whenever it takes place without that religious solemnity, which the Christian will ever regard, as his privilege, as well as his duty.

The general conduct of the clergy in the world cannot require much notice. Moral and religious behaviour, deference to the common notions of the grave and sober demeanour exacted from the clergy, constant walking before society as in the presence of God, and the uniform serenity which results from the consciousness of being governed by lofty principle, are always taken for granted, when we speak of the conduct of the clergy before the world: and oh! how different should we all be, from what we too often are, if we were thus deeply impressed with the remembrance of our high calling, with love to the souls of men, and desire to serve to the utmost the glory and the cause of Christ. Let me here refer, too, to that more vexatious mingling with the world, which cannot by any means be wholly avoided, and which sullies our brightness, because we cannot but offend some. I refer to our conduct, in what is called politics. The advice I would submit to you on this point is, to shun, like the pestilence itself, all that minute,

paltry, petty, harassing, waste of time which arises from being blended and mixed, with the partisans, of contentious collisions of opinions. Be satisfied with two things, the quiet vote, and the select opportunity for the decided expression of your conclusions; but do not permit your time to be wasted, your temper to be harassed, and your usefulness destroyed, by bitter daily strife and dispute, upon matters, which we can neither impede nor prevent. The mere political clergyman is disregarded even by his own political friends. In your common visits among your people, endeavour as much as possible to turn away their thoughts from these topics. Direct them, by conversation of a graver kind, to the noble subjects, which are submitted to them by your teaching. As much as your principles, judgment, and sober conclusions will allow you, act with your people in their endeavours to promote what appear to them, to be schemes of usefulness, plans of general good, or promoting spiritual objects. Agree as much as possible with them in these things; but never sacrifice principle, or self-approbation, to the hope of conciliation, or the desire of popularity. Other remarks I might have ventured to submit to you, but I shall detain you no longer, my reverend brethren, than to express my humble and earnest prayer to God, that he will still, as he has so long done, grant his blessing to this church—to its people, that they may return, with the conviction of our deserving their approbation, to their ancient respect, and love, and deference to their authorized teachers, rather than to the dubious intruder—to its clergy, that they may more and more bind up the broken-hearted, heal the spiritually sick, preach the gospel to the poor, and prepare all ranks and classes for the second coming of our Lord. Let us pray *for the nation*, that it may long continue as a religious and moral people, to be the Canaan of the world, in these latter days; and that neither the revival of old superstitions, nor the extension of strange novelties, may pervert the sound mind of England from the faith of the gospel, and its best form of profession, in our hallowed church. Let us pray for ourselves and for each

other, my reverend brethren, that we may all watch over ourselves and each other, with a godly jealousy, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith. May God grant us true repentance and his holy spirit, that we may live more and more to his service, and both save ourselves and them that hear us.

